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ABSTRACT

This book provides information and guidance to rural community members for improving their schools through community involvement. It encourages new ways of thinking about the purposes of education, the roles of schools, and methods of teaching and learning. After establishing the purpose and need for community involvement in rural small schools, the book proposes a new focus for rural schools for the 21st century, emphasizing collaboration and the process approach to learning. It addresses the advantages and disadvantages of small schools. Six chapters give examples of how schools and communities have gone about solving their problems and achieving their goals. The last three chapters are devoted to putting goals into action. The chapter titles are: (1) Your School, Your Community, and You; (2) The New Basics; (3) Small By Choice: Wrestling with Consolidation; (4) Your Community as a Focus of Study; (5) Foxfire; (6) Schools, Business, and Development; (7) The Four-Day School Week; (8) The Multi-Grade Classroom; (9) Education and Technology; (10) Getting Organized and Gathering Information; (11) Making Decisions; and (12) Raising Funds. References and resources are listed after each chapter. The appendices provide additional information about the organization of the school system, organizations and journals that can be used as resources, the Woodlands Mountain Institute which authored the book, and guidelines to decide on what level to work. The handbook contains numerous planning and decisionmaking worksheets. (KS)

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YOUR CHOICE

Paths to Improving Your Small Schools

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This handbook is a production of Woodlands Mountain Institute, which is solely responsible for its content. Founded in 1972, Woodlands Mountain Institute is a nonprofit educational and scientific organization dedicated to advancing mountain cultures and preserving mountain environments in the Appalachian Mountains and around the world. The programs of the organization are supported through tuition revenue and tax deductible donations.

The handbook was prepared by the staff of the Institute's Community Schools Program. This program provides information and support to rural residents for improving their schools through community involvement and improving their communities through their schools.

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Where This Handbook Comes From

This Handbook grew and was nourished in the informal networks. Colleagues at Woodlands Mountain Institute supported research and writing with ideas, errands, putting work aside, and with friendship. Family members opened vast amounts of family time so the authors could dig deeper and search more broadly. Voices across America answered hundreds of telephone calls, sharing what information they had and kindly referring the authors on to others -- we will never see their faces, but the Handbook matured from their kindnesses.

Then, there is the concrete financial support. To the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, especially their Trustees, Scott McVay and Alexandra Christie, go thanks. Organizations around America know what we mean when we recognize that the Dodge Foundation gave a lot more than money to help this project along. With the Dodge Foundation was the quiet but extremely effective John R. McCune Charitable Trust. Their grant this past year, as for the past decade, gave the unrestricted funds to test new ideas and to take risks. Such support works like seeds that grow in potent ways.

An Advisory Committee, whose wisdom helped move this Handbook from vision to practicality, is listed on the following page. Each member helped.

In the final writing, though, this Handbook is the work of a team that received the above rich nourishment. Many suggestions were given we could not handle. Some of the information we received is changing as we write. The friends, listed above, had visions of potential beyond what this Handbook now delivers. These, and any mistakes you will see as you read, are our failings. They will be helped if you who now work with the Handbook contact us and point them out. This is a workbook -- and we will work to make it better if you can join now and tell us further what will make it more useful and more accurate.

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C O N T E N T S

A Letter to Citizens

A Letter to Teachers

Introduction

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(The following excerpts are from *The Teachers' Vision of the Future of Education: A Challenge to the Nation*, published by IMPACT II, The Teachers Network.)

Dear Concerned Citizens:

...We are your teachers and, like you, we are concerned about the future of our children, teachers, schools, families and community....

...Each day we struggle with an educational system designed in the 19th century that is clearly outdated and repressive. It no longer serves us, or the children we teach. Increasingly we are asked to be substitute parents, social workers and even police for children who are often victims of violence, drugs and deteriorating families and communities. Even though there are a few model schools that work and some heroic teachers who buck the system, it is the failure of the whole system that concerns us. Systemwide failure now threatens to undermine our society....

...In order to have a free, productive and creative society, we must engineer a fundamental transformation of our nation's educational system. To begin with, we must re-define who is learner and who is teacher, and where learning takes place and why. And we must create a vision of what teaching and learning can be....

...Envision with us the future: It is now sometime in the future-more than 20 but less than 100 years from now. The "schools" we see are no longer the isolated schools of the 1990s but rather campus-style community learning centers with walls that protect but do not confine. There are parks, sports centers, playing fields, a public library, and medical and social support services....

...This complex includes multimedia technology centers for research, global collaboration, and interest exploration. There are well-equipped laboratories for inquiry-based research, language labs, planning rooms, performance areas, animal habitats, student-run supply stores, and gardens and greenhouses that provide produce for the food plaza....

...Early learning experiences involve the "whole child." Curriculum is developed with an awareness of a child's emotional, physical, creative, intellectual and environmental needs. Students and their teachers begin with a study of their immediate community as they develop courses relevant to their lives and interests....

...In our vision, learning is no longer just for children and teaching is no longer done only by teachers. These learning centers are for the whole community. Children, teenagers, seniors and working adults come together to learn and teach. The focus of education for our young people is to help them learn the techniques of gathering information; acquire the skills of reading, writing, communication and working cooperatively; and discover the great joy of learning....

...All classrooms are arranged for collaborative, cooperative work. Desks and tables are clustered; computers, books and maps are readily available. Adults explore new career options while they help teach the young. Older people share their wisdom as they continue to learn. Groups of all ages discuss ideas, problems and community issues. The goal is to learn to be "lifelong" learners and teachers in a community that honors education.

Dear Teacher:

This book invites, in fact urges, community members to become more involved in their local schools. It encourages them to think in new ways about the purposes of education, the roles of schools, and methods of teaching and learning.

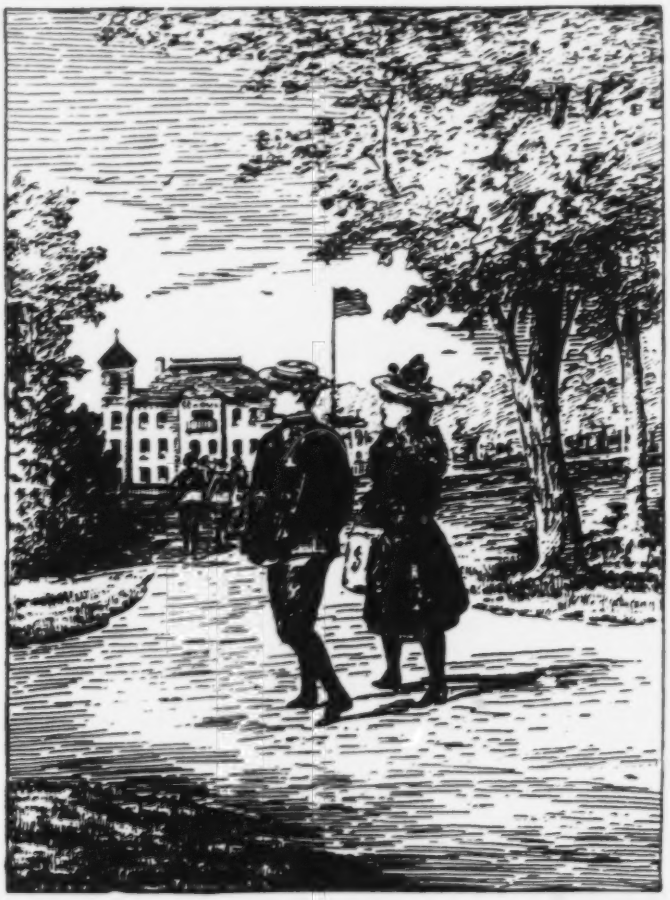
The reason the book is written for community members rather than for you is simple: volumes of material on all of these topics have already been produced for teachers and other education professionals. Through your professional networks, you have access to more information than a human being can digest. Most of the references and resources cited in this book are written for education professionals. Fine training in a wide array of new instructional methods is available in many forms, from books and videotapes to residential graduate-credit courses.

Community members do not have access to these materials. But they are profoundly affected by what goes on in their schools, even if they are only partially aware that this is so.

Schools affect communities. You, as an education professional, are doubtless aware of at least some of the changes that are sweeping education. These changes may excite, frighten, or irritate you - most likely a mixture of all three. It is our intention to bring some of these changes to the attention of rural community members in such a way that they, forming a partnership with you, can put these changes to the best possible use, community by community.

None of the ideas in this book will go far without you. On the other hand, with just a small group of informed, supportive community members, you can make a terrific difference in the future of your school and community. When citizens and teachers stare at one another from opposite sides of the school door, they can seem to exist in different worlds. But when, instead, schools are viewed as the heart of the community, vitally interacting with it, citizens and teachers become partners in the same essential endeavor. Please help us; we need you.

CHAPTER I
Your School, Your Community, and You



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Do you live in a rural community? This book is for you. Are you interested in, worried about, angry at, or excited about your local school? This book is for you. Do you wonder how you can make your community school better? This book is for you.

This book's first message:
You are not alone.

Others like you are also concerned about their schools and communities. Rural residents can learn from one another and help one another find solutions to common problems.

This book's second message:
You can make a difference.

How, you ask? Use this book. Wear it out. Copy pages and give them to your friends. Fill in the worksheets and make up more of your own. Call the people who are listed as contacts. Join the organizations listed in these pages. Subscribe to the publications that best address your situation. Call or write to us and let us know what further information you need. Register your workbook, so we can put you on the mailing list for updates, revisions, and other support networks we establish. This book is for you and your community—help us make it work for you.

This Book and You

This book is a catalog of options. It is not meant to prescribe solutions, but to awaken a sense of possibilities for your school and your community. The book is written with the assumption that every community is unique, and that individuals reading it will start from widely differing perspectives. No matter where you start, schools and communities are so interwoven that any one starting point, seriously pursued, will lead you from one area to another.

The various strands in this book were chosen from an array of exciting and effective educational possibilities, each of which does one or more of the following:

- cuts the cost of operating a small school,
- enhances the relationship between a school and its community for mutual benefit,
- addresses a common small school situation,
- plays on a community's distinctive identity, or
- updates educational practice in a way particularly suited to small-school settings.

Small schools are not inherently good or bad—handled creatively, they have great potential for serving their communities in many ways. There are ways to minimize the problems of smallness while maximizing its strengths. The key is the connection between the school and the community. What matters at school is what actually goes on there, not appearance, not teachers' degrees, not equipment inventory. A community school can supplement its facilities with community facilities, its teachers' knowledge with its community's knowledge, its equipment with its community's equipment, and vice versa, with savings and enhancement for both.

All the options you need for excellent education in a small rural community are already there if you choose to take advantage of them. As the National Diffusion Network's FAST Science curriculum demonstrates, you can have excellent science instruction with minimal equipment. As Eliot Wigginton's Foxfire program demonstrates, you can have innovative, hands-on, community-based instruction headed by a generalist teacher in an ordinary-looking rural school. Some options involve learning different ways to work with students than the methods your teachers use now; training for teachers is available and affordable, and may be the best investment your school or system can make. Some involve mentally dissolving your school walls, using the streets of your town as classrooms in which you teach your children about America. Some involve transforming your expectations about who goes to school and who doesn't, opening your doors and your curriculum to the adults and the pre-schoolers of your community. Some involve purchasing expensive technology, but there is now such a range of options, both in what you can get and in how you can get it, that any community can find a way to build toward its long-range technology goals.

You don't have to tackle the whole knot.
Just pick a strand and begin to follow it.

When you begin to work with the ideas in this book, you will find that they interact and mesh with each other. For example, let's say that the most pressing problem you face is financial. Chapter VII directly addresses the need to cut operating costs by looking at the four-day school week as an alternative schedule. But the four-day week also provides an opportunity, through longer class periods, to encourage more active learning experiences for your students (as outlined in Chapter II's discussion of the New Basics).

"With 59 percent of the nation's schools defined as rural, many educators are finding pathways to school reform in their own back-yards. Rural educators across the country are using the strengths of their schools to approach these commonly called-for elements of educational redesign.

- *Customized instruction to meet individual needs.*
- *Interdisciplinary and cross-curriculum instruction.*
- *Use of the community as a class-room.*
- *A more flexible school day.*
- *Use of technology to provide access to advanced curriculum and resources from around the globe."*

—The Rural Report, April 1990

The noninstructional day of a four-day week lends itself to pursuing the kinds of projects and courses such as school-based enterprises and Foxfire style courses (see Chapters V and VI respectively.) It also provides an ideal time for teacher training, to help teachers master the skills required for coaching, multi-age grouping, and hands-on learning experiences.

We suggest that you skim the entire book. Then go back to the sections that most directly relate to where you are now. *Do something*, even if it's only starting a discussion. But as you proceed, check back from time to time to the ideas in the other chapters. Mix and mingle the ideas to suit your situation.

"Successful reforms ... have a homemade character. They are not lifted from what others have done."

—Matthews and McAfee, p. 6.

How to Use This Book

This is a workbook. It has worksheets and questions. The readers who get their money's worth will be the ones who gather some friends, fill out the worksheets and write down answers to the questions.

We have tried to lay the book out functionally, so you would be most likely to find the information you need where you are most likely to look for it. But much of the information belongs in several places. For example, good methods of instruction are required to make the ideas in this book work. Those methods are referred to at different points throughout the book, as well as in the next chapter.

On the other hand, the list of "players in the school system," who will affect anything you decide to do, is only found in the Appendix A, "Knowing The System." Flip around in the book if you can't find the information you need. It may be missing, in which case call us. But it may just be tucked away in another chapter or lurking in the References and Resources lists at the back.

Up Front

Rural schools have many options. We hope this book will help you recognize just how many options there are. To write it we had to make some assumptions about who should be involved in making decisions about schools, and about what good education is.

Here is where we begin:

- Everyone has a stake in a community's schools. Parents want their children to be well prepared for life. Community members want young people to grow into responsible citizens capable of contributing to the community. School professionals want to be effective in their work.

- Everyone has a rightful place in making decisions about education. Education is one of the largest undertakings of our government—a government founded on the principle of citizen participation. Public education is paid for by everyone's taxes; its outcomes affect the fabric of society.

- Good education requires a variety of teaching methods. Children differ greatly from one another. Furthermore, the world of work, and even knowledge, are changing incredibly fast. Only a wide range of strategies can prepare differing children for the complex lives they face.

- The greatest need in our schools is opportunities for active, reality-based learning.

- Schools and communities are inextricably linked. The values of one affect the values of the other. The fortunes of one affect the fortunes of the other. Each has resources to offer the other. The more self-consciously they build on their inherent connection, the better off both will be.

Many groups are at work on our schools—state governments, teachers unions, state education departments, private foundations, and businesses. While each is important, none is more important than you—the citizens served by the schools. Unfortunately, since citizens are not automatically organized into working units, they may be the last ones to get involved in decisions that affect their schools.

You can't wait to be invited to participate in school reform. Why? After a century-long trend toward professionalization, public schools are having to re-learn how to involve the public. The public school officials whose role it should be to invite you to participate may not know where to start. They may be too territorial or defensive to do it, they may be reluctant to share the power they now have, or they may just be too busy. They may want your help, but do not know how to approach the public, how to listen to what people have to say, or how to incorporate public participation into their daily decision making. So...

Invite yourself.

To be effectively involved takes time, guts, knowledge, organization, and persistence. What you don't have of these you can develop over time. The work you do will benefit not only the particular children you most care about, but also your community and society at large.

Rural Schools and Education Reform: They May Be Closer Than You Think

The words "reform" and "restructuring" have been on the forefront of educational thought for some time. Business, political and educational leaders have condemned the design of our nation's schools which have become known as ineffective for teaching children of the Information Age.

Rural schools have been particularly criticized. The mass-production factory model of schooling that requires large numbers of students to operate effectively has led to the notion that small, rural schools are second rate.

But if you look closely at some of the common recommendations for school redesign, you may discover a surprising fact—the structure of rural schools creates an atmosphere open to educational change. Consider the following characteristics of rural schools:

• Schools are central to the life of rural communities.

• Students are educated in small groups, students tutor their peers, and often learn in teams or groups.

• Student-teacher ratios are low and students receive individual attention.

•Communication is personal, rapid and direct.

•Traditions favor cooperation, new technology and entrepreneurship.

—*The Rural Report, April 1990.*

Rural Education—The Facts

• Nearly 60% of all school districts are rural, with 3/4 of their students living in a town with less than 2,500 population.

• Nearly 75% of the nation's school districts are small, enrolling fewer than 2,500 students

• More than half the schools districts in America are both rural and small.

• More than 2.2 million American children attend 2,750 rural schools that suffer from chronic, severe "poorness."

• Rural and agricultural are not synonomous—Only 29% of non-metro counties have an economic base dependent primarily on agriculture.

—The Rural Report, , McREL.

Why Focus on Rural Schools?

Rural communities and their schools are closely linked. The local school system is one of the largest employers in a small community. It is probably one of the largest landholders in the community. Through its payroll, through its schedule, through its politics and through its students, the school system affects virtually every family in the community, regardless of whether they have children attending school. Regardless of whether the school makes the most of its local purchasing power, it still plays a major role in a small economy simply by providing the money that many families live on.

On the other hand, the school is in turn heavily influenced by the community. Its budget is affected by local economic conditions. Its student body is affected by a rising or falling population base and by the kinds of jobs available for families in the community. Its educational aspirations and abilities are affected by the human resources and the values of the community.

Thus, your community schools both affect and reflect your community's economy. They both affect and reflect your community's politics and values. In short, they affect your community's future in every respect.

Rural communities are facing difficult times. Rural areas suffer from declining economies, declining populations, decreasing tax bases, increasing costs of services, and a high percentage of fixed-income residents.

Rural schools participate in these problems. They face falling enrollments and lower tax support for their services, while state and federal requirements placed on schools are increasing. Some communities face increases in enrollment that they can't keep up with, while most face school

Schools in small towns and throughout rural America serve more that one-third of the nation's students. Unfortunately, many of these schools face and will continue to face unique and lingering challenges as we head into the next century.

Inadequate income and a lack of economic development within many nonmetropolitan counties are well documented. Problems caused by poverty often compounded by sparse settlement and isolation that severely limits student access to learning resources, cultural enrichment, and even basic services. Yet many rural schools often enjoy certain advantages, such as strong community involvement, individual attention to students, and flexible scheduling, that are well worth nurturing and emulating.

—U.S. Dept. of Education.

closures and redistricting due to declining enrollment. They may face citizen disinterest when many members of the community do not have school-age children.

Furthermore, while schools in general have been severely criticized in recent years, rural people often feel that their schools receive more than their fair share of this criticism. They may be compared unfavorably to their larger counterparts. Rural citizens are told that their schools are too small to offer the range of courses students need to succeed today, that their teachers aren't qualified to teach the more specialized courses, or that their facilities aren't up to date. In many instances, they are encouraged to merge their local schools into larger ones serving a larger population base, with the expectation that this will improve the education they provide for their children.

"Many sense that the fate of the community and the quality of education are inextricably joined together—that there are compelling reasons to improve.... Every community, sooner or later, has to face the question of whether it has the will and resolve to act."
—Matthews and McAfee, p. 4.

What does all of this mean for you?

Your local school is now required to *do more—*

- produce higher test scores
- offer more varied advanced courses
- introduce modern technology
- improve facilities
- produce better-trained, more-employable graduates

with less—

- cut administrative overhead
- cut back faculty
- increase class size
- hold down taxes.

Impossible? Not if you're prepared to try some new solutions. The options available to small and rural schools have never been greater. The "Information Age" provides technological resources to do things differently from how we have done them for the past 100 years. People who once had to live in metropolitan areas to earn their living

can now consider living in more rural areas. Communication that once was impossible between geographically isolated regions is now available at the push of a button. Also, many of the recommendations being generated by educators on the forefront of reform are particularly well-suited to small, rural schools.

Active Learning

Such schools have distinct strengths. For example, one of the greatest concerns in the education community today is how students can develop the thinking abilities that will enable them to be flexible problem solvers as adults. The educational approach that most effectively addresses this need is "active learning," best done in small groups or through coaching. This approach to education is very different from the factory model on which our large, "shopping-mall" schools are based. It requires a smaller, more personal environment—like that of small schools. To achieve this, large schools across the country are experimenting with "schools within a school" to break down their oversized, factory model of education. Could it be that rural schools, playing on their distinctive strengths, have a ready-made edge in school reform?

"When one governor described a successful education program in his state, he said it was based on one principle: Communities fix schools."
—Matthews and McAfee, p. 5.

Community Involvement

Community schools can contribute significantly to the idea of community involvement in the schools. Community involvement is attracting a lot of attention among those involved in educational reform. States are writing community involvement requirements into their school reform legislation. Certain federally funded programs have long required parent involvement. Research shows that parent involvement in schools contributes to higher student achievement scores. Businesses are jumping into the picture, with school-business partnerships, mentoring projects, and volunteer programs.

But what form of community involvement is most productive for all concerned is still to be determined. For example, a frequently cited survey notes that parents and teachers differ in their views of how parents should be involved in schools. Parents show interest in all aspects of the school, including tutoring and school governance, while teachers and administrators favor limited roles for parents, such as fund raising and attending school performances.

A recent book by Edward Pauly, *The Classroom Crucible*, asserts that one of the most important ways that parents can contribute to effective learning in schools is to promote the practice of parents helping to select the classroom to which their children are assigned. Pauly's work is based on research that indicates that "students' achievement is determined by the classroom to which they belong, and the things that happen there every day." *(Ed. Week, May 1, 1991)* Pauly's ideas may be an easy place for you to start. But parent involvement in schools or classrooms is not the same thing as communities and schools that choose to accentuate their involvement with each other for maximum mutual benefit.

In later chapters we have outlined examples of this mutual involvment that vary in the mix of players from inside and outside the school. Sometimes students or the school provide the community with services or facilities. In other instances, such as the Foxfire approach to learning, the community opens its doors to allow the student to use it for study.

Whatever the focus, efforts are slowly developing to reinvolve communities in their schools. What you do with this book is one such effort. Rural communities and their schools may be able to contribute particularly well to such efforts, because they can play on their distinctive strengths—the knowledge that the school has of the community in which it resides, the ease of

communication and relative flexibility with which small communities operate, the many overlapping areas of activity of adults within the community, which might be used to encourage cooperation among key groups such as the chamber of commerce, civic clubs, the school board, and school-based management teams.

But That's Not My Job

Isn't improving the school the work of superintendents, principals, and teachers? Isn't that what we pay them for? And isn't that what we elect a school board for?

Yes, working on the schools is the job of all those people. But if you want your community to survive and thrive, it is also your job. As a society we are in the midst of trying to recreate public consensus about the role of schools and the role of learning in our society. Education professionals, while trained for certain functions within the system, are not necessarily any better trained for this "public consensus" task than are parents and other citizens. When an issue involves society as a whole, it is inappropriate to suggest that one particular group should determine the agenda and the solution.

Professionals within the school system have vital knowledge and skills. But professionals, by definition, have been trained to look at things a certain way. That is both their strength and their weakness. They need to be reminded of how their work relates to the lives and values of those they serve. They need to be reminded of how changes in society affect what they do and what is expected of them. They are accustomed to taking the current system for granted. It may be hard for them to imagine schools organized differently than they now are. Or they may just need encouragement from those they serve. You can provide encouragement and vision. Helping you do that is much of what this book is about.

Habits of Involvement

Schools and communities need each other. We have already discussed the many links beween school and communities that exist in any small community. Now we would like to stress the need for developing habits of involvement.

The Isolation of Schools

Long ago, rural schools were very small, localized, and directly controlled by citizens. The passing years have moved effective control of schools into the hands of professionals. While we are not suggesting a return to the old control pattern, we do suggest that the trend has gone too far in isolating schools from the communities they serve.

"There is power other than established authority, money, and position. These are public kinds of power: for example, the power of a good idea, the power of commitment, and the power that grows out of strong relationships. This kind of power can be generated by community."

—Matthews and McAfee, p. 26.

Many problems spring from this isolation. Some parents may feel alienated and unwelcome at the school, especially if they are uncomfortable around more educated teachers. This causes problems for the students, who must cross between the values and expectations of the home and those of the school. It can cause problems for teachers, who may feel that the parents don't care about and don't support their children's education. It causes problems for parents who feel that the school shuts them out, perhaps looks down on them, and is taking their children away from them.

At bottom, schools and families share a common task. They have different information and different skills to bring to the task. The problem of isolation discussed above blocks accomplishment of their shared task, frustrating all those involved. How ironic that they should so often view one another as part of the problem rather than as partners.

The isolation of the school leads to other problems as well. It separates "school learning" from "life learning," and creates a false hierarchy of learning. One or both forms of learning may be

denigrated in the process, as when a "self-made" person scoffs at "book learning," or a teacher neglects to recognize the rich culture of a rural child's home life because it differs from that of middle America.

In addition, isolation of schools can create barriers to a community's full use of its investment in education. For example, consider the number of hours that many school buildings stand empty because school is viewed as fundamentally separate from other community life. (This can be true even in a community that considers its school to be the center of its social life—the social life referred to may be exclusively school-sponsored events, rather than including a wide range of sponsorship.) What applies to buildings also applies to human resources and activities.

"Long term successes seem to have one common characteristic: the community as a whole—meaning the public itself—is deeply invested in making changes."
—Matthews and McAfee, p.5.

Isolation of the school can also close the school off from community resources that might expand its curriculum and facilities. For example, does a small town need both a town park and a school playground, or can the two units combine their funds to create one excellent facility? Does the 4-H program have a fine public speaking unit that could be offered to all students under the auspices of the school, stretching the capability of its language arts program? Imagine a rural community that combines all of its transportation needs into one bus system, paid from several sources, enabling elders to get to town and students to have some schedule options.

Parental Involvement in Schools

Promoting increased cooperation between schools and communities for mutual gain is one reason for you to get involved. Another reason comes from recent research on the effect of parent involvement in schools. Parent involvement increases student performance.

Parent involvement helps parents understand the problems and expectations of teachers. It signals to the students that the school is not a separate world, unknown to their families. It signals that what happens in school is important to their parents, and that their parents know about that aspect of their lives. In these ways, parent involvement supports what happens at school.

But family-school involvement should be a two-way street. It is an opportunity for teachers to attune themselves to the problems, gifts and expectations of families, to learn about their students, and to express respect for the child's life outside of school.

Parents and families, after all, are not only a child's first teacher, they are also the child's most enduring teacher. Only at its worst (for example, rotating foster care) does a child's home life approximate the fragmentation of a child's experience of school. Consider that experience: first moving from adult to adult, year by year, each adult assuming vast but temporary importance to the child, then moving through changing groups of adults and peers hour by hour through the high-school day, and at the same time probably changing schools on several occasions. Who in this great rotation is watching out for the consistency and wholeness of the child's growth if not the family? Schools need these families as equal players.

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Because of their small size, rural schools may have and use more knowledge of their students, and families may be more familiar with the school

than in large urban schools. But even in small communities the school is probably far more isolated than necessary. The knowledge that schools and communities have of each other may not be fully recognized and used. Even small schools may have groups who, due to social and economic standing, feel scorned by school personnel.

Where small community schools differ from large ones is in their potential for correcting the situation. Simply by virtue of size, they may stand a better chance of creating consensus about their schools. They are prime candidates for involving parents and community members, because they know who those people are and where to find them. They can readily find out what resources their community members hold—special knowledge, special experiences, talents, hobbies, and so forth.

In contrast to employers in urban areas, rural employers are likely to have employees whose children all attend one school, or at least schools in one system. Thus it behooves those employers to pay attention to what happens in that school. It is also easier for the school and employer to identify ways to work together. A simple example might be letting parents out early on the day that the school is holding parent-teacher conferences.

Parent and community involvement in the schools can help create a shared vision toward which all can work. It can trim duplicated effort—much needed where resources are few. It can open up ideas for new ways that the school can meet community needs. Perhaps parents need on-site child care in order to be involved with their older children, or parenting classes, or their own introduction to computers. And it can open up ideas for new ways that the community can serve the purposes of the school, such as business apprenticeships, guest teachers, or financial assistance.

Why You?

Why you? Because all of us are caught up in a society of change—change that occurs so quickly that no one, not even the best prepared and most forward-thinking of professionals, can keep up. In this context of change, we need everyone's best effort to balance reliable traditional values with changing circumstances.

Why you? Because you, your school, your children and your community deserve the highest possible return from your relationship and your tax investment. You'll only get that when you consciously join forces.

Why you? Because you live in a democracy. This is why you have both a right and a responsibility to be involved directly with making choices about your school system. It is also why, at times, when you get involved, you create ripples that go farther than you thought they could.

You must be well informed. Know your options. Know your limitations. You have legal options and legal limitations, physical options and physical limitations, decision-making options and decision-making limitations, financial options and financial limitations. This book is aimed at widening your awareness of options and reducing your limitations, so that you can help create your school and community's future.

Rural schools and communities can determine their own future. To help your community survive and flourish may require creativity, cooperation among those who have not cooperated much in the past, and a willingness on many people's part to try doing some things differently. But schools and communities thrive when people want them to!

What Can You Do?

You have two kinds of power. One of these is the direct political power of citizens in a democratic government. You can vote, organize, lobby, attend meetings and state your views, and write letters to the editor of your newspaper.

You have another power, easily equal to your political influence. You can seek information, generate interest in new ideas, lead others in your community into cooperation, and accomplish your goals without ever entering what most people consider to be the political arena. You do this when you convince your local parent teacher organization to sponsor a dance to raise money for cheerleader uniforms. You can do the same thing for broader purposes.

Under the American system of government, the right and the responsibility to educate children belongs to the states. Citizens cannot choose not to educate their children—they must yield to the state's right to insist that children be educated. On the other hand, the state does not have the right to give up on certain portions of the population, or to provide different levels and qualities of education to different groups. Citizens have the right to hold the states to their responsibility for educating all children.

This is the context in which you, as a citizen, become an education advocate. Whether you are concerned with your own child's daily learning experiences, with the course offerings or teaching methods at your local school, or with the financial status or power politics of your school district, your participation is governed by the state's right and responsibility to educate children.

Do not underestimate what you can do in this context. You are a citizen decision maker in your state's educational system. States differ from one another in their handling of major issues, states

change their policies as a result of citizen opinion, and most states are currently examining much that has been taken for granted in their educational systems. This is a prime time to stand up and be counted. You can make a difference.

"Never doubt that a small group of concerned people can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."
—Margaret Mead

Nearly two hundred years ago, a Frenchman visiting the youthful United States commented:

> *"These Americans are a peculiar people. If, in a local community, a citizen becomes aware of a human need that is not being met, he thereupon discusses the situation with his neighbors. Suddenly a committee comes into existence. The committee thereupon begins to operate on behalf of the need and a new community function is established. It is like watching a miracle, because these citizens perform this act without a single reference to any bureaucracy, or any official agency."*
>
> *—Alexis de Tocqueville*

"It doesn't take much strength to do things, but it requires great strength to decide on what to do."
—Elbert Hubbard In QUOTE

You and others like you continue to perform these miracles daily.

So How Do I Start?

If you want to get busy right now, skip to our chapter "Getting Organized". Meanwhile, the following chapters will give you information on education issues of current concern to many rural schools, and information or what others are doing.

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CHAPTER II
The New Basics

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This is an evolving chapter. More work is needed to bring together the lessons from educational research with current knowledge from the psychology of how people learn, and to apply these to the needs of rural schools. First, you can help by sending in your reactions to this chapter. Tell us what you want to know about learning. Second, as you read, keep in mind the organization of this chapter. There is a lot packed in here:

The Balancing Act of Educational Purposes
- *Knowledge*
- *Skills*
- *Navigational Abilities*

Schooling for the 21st Century
- *Where We Have Been*
- *Collaborative Classrooms*
- *For Example:*
  The Process Approach to Teaching Writing

Chapter *EXTRAS*

Finding New Approaches to Old Subjects
Teacher Training
Guidelines and Questions for Community Discussion
The Growth of Intelligence

How, Not What

When it comes to learning for the 21st century, *how* to learn is often going to be more important than *what* to learn.

The new basics are the skills required to:

seek new information
synthesize information
analyze problems
solve problems
make thoughtful decisions

Happily, the instructional methods best suited to teaching the new basics adapt particularly well to using the community as a focus of study; are easily applied in small, flexible settings; and require knowledge of individual students (which most community school teachers have).

In other words, these instructional methods are highly suited to community school settings. In fact, many of these methods were used in one-room school house days, before the Industrial Age pressured us into "bigger is better." With the dawning of the Information Age, we have come full circle educationally, and this is good news for community schools.

What does good education look like? There is no one simple answer to this question. Good education comes in many forms. Your mission is to determine the best form for your community, and the best means of creating it from what you now have.

The Balancing Act—What Does Education Accomplish?

Important educational factors can generally be grouped into three categories:

1. acquiring knowledge;
2. developing skills; and
3. developing navigational abilities.

Acquiring Knowledge

Acquiring knowledge, dominates the way our schools work. Roughly 75% of classroom time is devoted to teaching knowledge—lecturing, explaining, drilling and testing. The standard classroom arrangement—desks in rows facing a teacher—promotes these methods of teaching and this area of learning.

Knowledge is crucial, but *overemphasis on accumulation of knowledge is a serious problem*—not because knowledge is unimportant, but because *other aspects of learning are equally or perhaps even more important.* Allowing this area of learning to dominate our schools has drawbacks:

• Modern information changes rapidly. Our understanding of the world changes, the way things are put together changes, the laws of our country change.

• Knowledge is easily forgotten. How many of us could pass tests today that we scored well on in school?

• The very nature of knowledge changes. What were once separate categories of knowledge are increasingly seen as interrelated. Consider the relatively new field of ecology, which requires that a student examine the interrelationships in a system more than examining the separate parts of the system.

• When we overemphasize one area of learning, we necessarily shortchange other areas.

From a gathering of businesspeople in Denver, Colorado:
"When I asked them what kinds of things they thought about when they were hiring, firing, and promoting people, the first word someone mentioned was creativity. Then someone else mentioned flexibility. As we moved around the table, people added problem-solving ability, skill in dealing with customers, adaptability to change, ability to work with others, good attitudes toward work, and willingness to learn. Although someone eventually mentioned basic skills, it became immediately clear that no one wanted to hire a person who had no more than basic skills."

—Rexford Brown, Schools of Thought, p. 4.

Developing Skills

Skills are what we use to apply what we know and to learn more. For example, skills make the effective *use* of spoken and written language possible, as contrasted to knowing *about* language (rules of grammar). Skills include such abilities as reading, writing, speaking, listening, observing, measuring, estimating, calculating, analyzing, reasoning, and synthesizing.

"Education should produce lifelong learners capable of

• earning a living in an intelligent and responsible fashion;

• functioning as intelligent and responsible citizens;

• leading intelligent and responsible lives."

—Paideia Group

Here is one list of skill categories. Each of the areas below actually involves multiple skills tied together into productive ability.

Writing—not only creative and poetic writing, but clear, well-organized writing that makes its points simply, strongly, and with accurate spelling and grammar. The very process of writing creates and clarifies thought; clear writing demonstrates clear thinking.

Reading—effective readers know where and how to

find information, can read quickly, grasp interdependent meaning out of a text, and synthesize what they read with other information.

Numeracy—the ability to accurately solve numerical problems, use numbers to express ideas, and understand numerical relationships; ie. the ability to think mathematically.

Analytical thinking—one foundation of decision-making and problem-solving. Can a student take a wealth of facts and reach a rational conclusion? Can a student take and idea and seek out what other ideas are associated with it?

Scientific thinking—the skill required to discover or create, and then test, natural order. Can a student observe accurately? Can a student detect patterns? Can a student take an idea and then work with facts to see if the idea is true? Can a student follow a rigorous sequence of steps to a conclusion?

Synthetic thinking—the ability to tie together strands of information and ideas from varied sources to create new ideas or to make decisions based on many factors at once.

Artistic and sports abilities—the ability to apprehend and create aesthetic and physical order, as contrasted with logical, analytical, or scientific order.

"Whether or not a student can handle a college workload is best shown by whether that student has the necessary academic skills. If a student can prove he or she has the skill level for that college, then the college can fill in the gaps."

—Robert Van Vranken, Senior Admissions Officer, Princton University.

Why are Skills So Important?
Skills are the methods we use to learn more. How could you move through life without them? When knowledge fades or changes, our intellectual skills enable us to learn anew. As life presents us with new circumstances, our skills enable us to continue learning, or re-learning, if necessary.

Skills do not go out of date. They are tools for life. Skills, once developed, are habits. In general, skills we learn in school will last longer than the particular knowledge we acquire.

Why are skills often shortchanged in our schools?
Because skills must be practiced to be learned. To develop skills, students must spend a good deal of time doing, rather than listening. Students cannot learn to read by being told about it; they cannot learn to write by studying about it. They must practice reading with endurance and interest. They must write, consider what they wrote, change what they wrote, write again, and then write some more.

Skills must be developed on ever more sophisticated levels; they are never fully accomplished. They must be woven into every area of a student's study, at every level. Skills are interrelated and cannot be effectively learned as isolated strands.

There is a dynamic relationship between knowledge and skills. The traditional way that our classrooms pass on knowledge depends on and develops only a small number of skills—primarily listening and short-term retention. Thus, our schools seem to be based on the assumption that knowledge is most important and that it can be passed on without a broad base of student skill.

Skills, on the other hand, can only be effectively taught when they are tied to knowledge. People do not read in a vacuum; they read about something. They will never become accomplished readers if what they read is not interesting to them—

interesting enough to sustain them through many hours of developing reading skills; interesting enough to cause them to think about what they have read, and to expect it to make sense. Furthermore, research shows that people reason best in those areas where they have the greatest knowledge. In other words, their knowledge base enhances their thinking skills.

We have often made the mistake of trying to teach skills the way we have long taught knowledge, treating them as if they were units of knowledge, breaking them into bits and pieces to be taught, practiced and tested in isolation. This actually separates skills from knowledge, and makes them meaningless. This is what the overuse of worksheets does.

Instead, because of the inherent link between skills and knowledge, if we concentrate more energy on integrated development of skills, we will automatically also be teaching knowledge, but by different means.

Navigational Abilities

Students need more than knowledge. They need more than skills. They need to be able to apply their knowledge and their skills to their lives. In other words, they need what we call navigational abilities, derived from well-grounded understanding of self, others, the world and ideas.

> *"Unlike verbal memories, something understood does not need to be exercised in order to be retained. This then, is the kind of learning that lasts for a lifetime and is of the greatest importance in the use of our minds and the conduct of our lives."*
>
> —*Adler, p. 182.*

Context

Today's students need to understand the interlocking contexts in which they live, and must know how to continually update and modify this understanding. Understanding context is not just a new way to study geography, political science, biology, or economics. Those studies have traditionally focused on facts within separate subject areas. Now it is necessary to understand how these areas are interrelated and affect each other.

What were once thought to be separate topics—botany, chemistry, social studies—are now interrelated through worldwide links. Moreover, these links change by the day. Relationships among the world's people, its economy, and its environment are not static facts that can be learned and then used. They undergo constant change. To understand them requires knowledge *of* them, but also the ability to understand how they affect and change each other.

Values

Partly by default, partly on purpose, schools teach values. This is unavoidable because children learn values from how they are treated. They learn values from imitating the people with whom they

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spend time. They spend a great deal of time at school learning values from their teachers and their peers. They learn values as much from *how* they are taught as from *what* they are taught. The unintended values taught by school are what some people call "the hidden curriculum."

For example: students on the playground are likely to learn that "might makes right." They will learn this from bigger, stronger children enforcing their wills on smaller, weaker children. They may learn the same lesson in a different way from big, strong adults enforcing their wills on children without helping the children to understand why. Or they might learn from those adults that there are better ways to treat people. To teach a different lesson requires time and coaching, not simply authoritative enforcement of rules.

You can ask yourself many questions about the values taught at your school. Does your school teach obedience at the expense of curiosity? Does your school teach self-expression at the expense of order? The values your school teaches are buried in school discipline policies, in teacher-student, school-parent, principal-teacher relationships. They are buried in the classroom behavior of teachers and students, and in the decision-making practices of the school. Consciously discussing and choosing values upon which everyone can agree has become, for many schools, a powerful starting point for school improvement.

Discussing your school's values may involve sharp disagreement. Still, you will have a better idea of what you want from your school after that discussion, so it worth doing. The guidelines at the end of this chapter should help to start your discussion off. We would appreciate any suggestions you could send us after you try them.

Information, knowledge, and wisdom, are closely related. We may often use these words interchangeably. But the relationship between them may have a great deal to do with whether our schooling is effective.

Information is facts.

Knowledge, according to the New American Heritage Dictionary, is "familiarity, awareness, or understanding gained through experience or study." In other words, knowledge is not just a sum of facts, but implies understanding the interplay between those facts.

Wisdom, according to the same dictionary, is "understanding of what is true, right or lasting." Wisdom implies an understanding that exceeds knowledge, that moves into the realm of making judgments, and into the realm of permanence.

Much of schooling seems to include the hidden assumption that development of a large enough store of facts leads to knowledge, and development of enough knowledge leads to wisdom. But there is no automatic progression from facts to wisdom. Getting to wisdom requires experience, reflection, testing and debate.

Making Decisions

Life is full of decisions. Does school provide students with practice in making decisions? Decision making in life is a lot more complicated than a multiple-choice test. Balancing options, creating new ones, and accepting compromise are all required skills, as well as seeking new information, synthesizing and analyzing information, and anticipating other consequences.

Making decisions can be dangerous. Some issues should be tackled in protected environments first rather than in real life. What do you do when loyalty and honesty conflict? How do you balance independence of mind against loyalty to a trusted individual or a set of beliefs?

Intelligence grows not by acquiring facts, but by learning how facts are acquired."
—Healy, p.228

The decisions we make are what we live with. A good decision might mean prosperity and happiness; a bad decision, hardship and sorrow. A good decision might mean hardship, sorrow, and a clear conscience, while a bad decision means prosperity and self-contempt. The importance of navigational abilities must not be underestimated.

A good education provides a person with a broad knowledge base and understanding of where that knowledge comes from, equips a person to continue to learn and grow, and prepares the person to navigate through the unexpected demands of life in a fast-changing world. We know more today than ever before about how people learn. We know more than ever before about how to foster the development of high-level thinking, problem-solving, and decision making. To provide such an education, schools are re-designing their educational methods to re-balance knowledge, skills, and understanding across the curriculum and for all ages.

Schooling for the 21st Century

Where We Have Been

For roughly 100 years, American public education has been moving from a citizen-controlled, rural, one-room school house toward a professionally controlled, urban, complex institution. Today's school system developed in response to specific historical pressures

> *"Much of our system of elementary and secondary education evolved in the context of an economy based on mass production. It emphasized development of the routinized skills necessary for routinized work....Teachers were engaged to convey these routine skills to students, based on texts written by others.*
>
> —A Nation Prepared, *p. 15.*

Our instructional methods date to the 1830s; our curriculum comes from the 1890s; and our management system comes from the early 1900s.

But we don't live in the 1830s, the 1890s, or even the early 1900s. We're opening the doors to the 21st century.

Many of our school practices have become irrelevant or ineffective. Your school must either change to prepare children for the lives they face, or it will continue to prepare them to meet the needs of a bygone era. Furthermore, it will deprive them of our best knowledge about educating human beings.

"The skills needed now are not routine. Our economy will be increasingly dependent on people who .... possess a feeling for mathematical concepts and the ways in which they can be applied to difficult problems, an ability to see patterns of meaning where others see only confusion; a cultivated creativity that leads them to new problems, new products and new services...and...the ability to work with other people in complex organizational environments where work groups must decide for themselves how to get the job done.

Such people will have the need and the ability to learn all the time....They will not come to the workplace knowing all they have to know, but knowing how to figure out what they need to know, where to get it, and how to make meaning out of it.

Success, then, depends on the whole society coming to place a much higher value not just on schooling but on learning. This demands a redefinition of the purposes of schooling, one that goes way beyond the inculcation of routine skills and the acquisition of a stock of facts. An economy based on people who think for a living requires schools dedicated to the creation of environments in which students become very adept at thinking for themselves, places where they master the art of learning and acquire a strong taste for it."

—A Nation Prepared, *pp. 20,21.*

For too long, our instructional methods have emphasised "pouring in" knowledge. Our dominant method of teaching and of organizing classrooms has emphasized passivity and content coverage rather than the students's dynamic learning process. To meet the demands of this age and to reflect modern knowledge of the learning process, we need to change the way our classrooms work.

And indeed, all across the country, educators are rethinking how children are taught in our classrooms today. They are designing learning activities that focus more on the active *process* of learning in the various disciplines.

Reintegrating Process and Content: Collaborative Classrooms

At the center of the process approach to learning is a child (whether age 5 or 15) actively groping toward new levels of understanding and ability. Young scientists design their own experiments to answer their own questions; young mathematicians create their own formulas to construct mathematical meaning; young writers learn grammar as a component of clear expression through revising and editing their own books.

What Does It Look Like?

Students move around. They huddle in small groups, discussing ways of approaching a problem, of sharing their work with one another. They pause all together to hear the results of different groups' work. They convene in a circle for an intensive, open-ended discussion. They consult reference books when needed. They try something, discuss why it doesn't work or how it could work better, then try again. The classroom looks more like an adult workshop than a traditional classroom. And, indeed, it is a workshop, buzzing with student workers.

And where is the teacher? The teacher moves from group to group listening, observing, pausing to ask questions, sometimes coaching a child one-on-one, sometimes sitting in the discussion circle, sometimes standing at the blackboard recording group reports or giving a brief lecture. Like any good teacher, he or she is sure to switch between different types of teaching.

Of course, in some cases neither the students nor the teacher are in the classroom at all. A high school class may be scattered all over town taking a survey. A grade school class may be in the garden on which their science curriculum is based.

Is this just a "do your own thing" approach to learning? Absolutely not. These classes are based on research about the underlying process by which

"Learning-centered schools are active, engaged, and participatory. Teachers work with other teachers to deliver an interdisciplinary curriculum and to share teaching techniques that promote collaboration in the classroom. Students assist other students in thinking through problems and solutions. Community members come into the school to share their expertise. Students go outside the school to plan for and implement community-based projects. Administrators and teachers collaborate on how to apply new teaching and learning research and practice to the ongoing renewal of their school."

—Restructuring...#1, p. 22.

skilled people work in a given discipline. How does a scientist think about a problem, generate solutions, and test those solutions? How does a proficient writer generate ideas, expand and express those ideas, and refine that expression? Answers to such questions lead to structured ways of helping children grow skillful and knowledgeable in these disciplines.

Activity is the key to brain development. In one study, twin kittens were given daily visual stimulation. One had to work for his entertainment while the other observed passively. "Although the visual input was the identical for both animals, the one who did the work developed more neural connections."

—Healy, p. 23.

Key Features of Collaborative Classes

1. Cooperative or small-group learning: The class as a whole is given a task to do, but they carry out the job in groups of 3–5 students. Members of a group expand on each other's ideas, share solutions, and create a group report. Students engaged in this kind of learning not only learn to reason within an academic discipline, they also learn effective ways of working with others, a requirement of the adult workplace and of life in families and communities.

> *"The collaborative classroom is alive with two-way communication. A major mode of communication is dialogue, which in a collaborative classroom is thinking made public....Hearing one student's logic prompts the other students to consider an alternative interpretation. Students are thus challenged to re-examine their own reasoning."*
>
> *—NCREL #3, p. 15.*

2. Coaching: Coaching is responsive teaching. An athletic coach brings players forward one by one to shoot a basket, swing a bat, or leap a hurdle. The coach responds to them individually, adjusting the way they approach their task and then releasing them to practice or integrate that guidance. What matters here is not what the student knows *about* the task but how he or she *performs* the task. Coaches also model the correct performance of a skill, perhaps verbally highlighting key aspects. They watch students performing in order to identify who needs more coaching, or to identify common patterns to discuss with the whole group.

Coaching is not just for the athletic field. In every subject area there are skills to be developed where each student needs to be related to individually. Process-oriented teachers study their students and provide individualized coaching.

The main coach in a classroom is the teacher. But students also coach one another. Coaching is an excellent way for community volunteers to contribute to a classroom. And in certain cases, computers serve as coaches, helping a student correct errors, expand thinking, or generate ideas.

3. Alternative schedules: Generally, process-oriented classes require larger chunks of time than our current school-day provides. Designing and carrying out science experiments or holding an in-depth discussion do not fit into snippets of time the way a spelling test does.

4. Project-based lessons: Activity in a process-oriented classroom is frequently organized around projects, as opposed to being organized around information. Make no mistake—these classes abound in information provided by teachers, students, and references of every sort. But they are not organized around the systematic transfer of information from the teacher to the students. Information is found and applied as needed for the growth of the project.

Projects are inherently meaningful. They result in some sort of finished product, whether it is a scientific model, a set of mathematical formulas communicating an idea, a documentary video, or a park bench.

Projects often represent interdisciplinary effort. For example, in a writing workshop students "publish" their completed work. A published work not only involves the full range of writing behaviors, but also measuring to produce a cover (math), and illustrating (art), not to mention reading. Furthermore, the content of the book might represent knowledge and research in a subject of interest to the student.

Because projects lead to finished products, they are worthy of an audience, whether that audience is other students in the classroom, parents, or the public at large.

A larger version of the project-based lesson is a thematic curriculum that ties together projects in several disciplines. For example, a class studying Colonial America for social studies prepares a meal of colonial food (math), writes books on colonial themes (writing), creates a colonial collage (art), and researches and debates diverse colonial values (language arts). In a process-oriented classroom, each piece of this thematic whole involves students in selecting and designing the work to be done, and in figuring out the best way to go about doing it.

Clearly, what teachers do in process-oriented classrooms differs considerably from what they do in traditional classrooms. For more information on teacher training and how you can help the transition, see page II-26.

For Example—The Process Approach to Teaching Writing

Traditionally, students learn to write after they have begun to read. Writing begins with penmanship—learning how to form the letters of the alphabet. In other words, writing starts as a physical skill rather than as the mental process of composing thoughts, ideas, stories, poems, or reports.

Traditionally, many parts of writing (eg. spelling, grammar, and punctuation) are broken into separate classes and taught independently of each other. These skills, and also different types of writing (such as stories, essays, and reports) are taught in a sequence chosen by someone other than the student or the teacher—perhaps a textbook writer, or a curriculum expert high up in the school system. Other parts of writing are not taught at all—for example, generating ideas, "thinking on paper," and revising first drafts. Teachers assign writing topics to students according to what the teacher wishes to accomplish with the lesson. Writing assignments are expected to be correct and ready for grading when they are turned in. Very likely the teacher reads and grades each work only once, and is the only person besides the student to see it. The teacher does not help the student improve that piece of writing, but expects the next piece to show improvement based on past corrections.

An unexamined assumption behind this method of teaching writing is that if you teach most of the bits and pieces, students will eventually put it all together into the behaviors of an accomplished, adult writer. A vast amount of effort goes into teaching all of this, without ever actually teaching students how to write. Contrast this traditional approach to the process approach of teaching writing.

In the process approach, students write before they begin to read, perhaps even before they know any of their letters. How? They start by writing with pictures. Or, they may dictate stories or explanations to an adult who writes down their words. In fact, they may learn to read from their own stories. The important thing at these early stages is that they learn that their thoughts and ideas can be put on paper and shared in a meaningful way with others.

As students progress, they write their own stories using what is called "invented spelling." Invented spelling has children learning to spell much the way a baby begins to talk. Babies go through predictable stages by first cooing, then saying "dada" and then on to words and sentences. Toddler speech is full of short cuts and "errors" which nonetheless communicate, and which gradually disappear. Similarly, inventive spellers gradually hone in on correct spelling. In the meantime, they are encouraged to create their own spellings in order to communicate on paper. In the process, they discover for themselves how to build words from letters.

"If a classroom is filled with thirty young authors, they are all working at very different stages in their writing. On any given day, one or two children may edit and recopy a piece, while others will begin a new one. Still others will be immersed in drafting. Some need a peer-conference; many will not. Some will toy with alternative titles, and some will tinker with their lead sentences. Some will stall."
—Calkins, p. 19.

Gradually, using the students' own compositions, the teacher introduces correct spellings and rules that students don't discover for themselves. Because it is connected to their own writing, because it helps them say something, this kind of spelling class makes sense to students. Furthermore, from the very beginning the students can write with the many words in their spoken vocabulary, rather than being limited to the few that they have learned to spell correctly. Thus, their thinking is not limited by their spelling knowledge, and their writing is more profound.

But we're not just talking about spelling here. Grammar and punctuation are treated the same way. Quotation marks are introduced when students want characters in their stories to talk, rather than being held for the Quotation Marks

Unit in the third month of the fourth grade (or whenever the textbook puts it). Periods may be introduced, with functional purpose, as the stop signs you put in when you want your reader to pause. As students get older, they are taught more about the underlying grammatical structures that they have already been using. Writing moves into all areas of study, with students "thinking on paper" not just in English class, but in math, science or music as well.

In this process approach to writing, students select their own writing topics. They do not expect to get a piece right the first time they write it, any more than a professional writer does. As they work their way through multiple drafts, they seek responses to their "work in progress" from classmates and the teacher until they, the authors, are satisfied that it is the way they want it to be. Frequently teachers do not grade the finished product, but rather the effort and the advancement of the student. A broader audience enjoys the work as finished works are "published" in decorative cardboard covers. Families see them and take pride. Commonly the author reads the book to the class before it is placed in the class or school library for others to read.

"The writing process approach requires a radically different pace and classroom structure than we are used to in our schools. If students are going to become deeply invested in their writing, and if they are going to draft and revise, sharing their texts with each other as they write, they need the luxury of time. If they are going to have the chance to do their best, and then to make their best better, they need long blocks of time .... Where, in the helter-skelter pace of the school day, is there time for the probing, experimentation, dialogue, and reflection that contribute to genuine learning?" (Calkins, pp. 23, 24)

Over time, the teacher presents students with a wide variety of strategies for getting writing started, generating ideas, expanding thoughts, thinking through how to say something more clearly or more memorably. It is all done in response to the students' own, ongoing writing. When the teacher notices many students working on conversations, she plans several "mini-lessons" on that theme.

As students advance through the grade levels, the kinds of writing they tackle changes, of course, but the principles remain the same. The process of writing—generating ideas, drafting, revising, "thinking on paper,"—is taken as seriously as the finished product. The teacher teaches primarily by

responding to the students' work. Students learn from one another. Most importantly, students learn to write by writing whole, meaningful works rather than being given a bag full of skill and knowledge tidbits.

Does the process approach sound foreign to you? A world apart from how you learned to write? You're not alone.

> *"The difference between what we knew about teaching students to write in the fifties and now is as great as the difference in medicine between bleeding people and laser surgery."*
>
> *—Mary Healy, quoted in Silberman, p. 64.*

This is only one subject example. You can find a similar revolution in all the major subjects taught in public schools today.

Conclusion

During this century schools have shouldered increasing burdens. Pressure for school reform today comes about, in part, because schools have taken on too much. Thus, the urge to "get back to basics" to make schools work again is a recognition that have to trim away some of these tasks. The basics around which our schools have been structured, however, are inadequate for today's demands. Without further burdening the schools, we must learn how to teach the new basics for lifelong learning. In closing, two points need to be stressed.

First, it is essential that each community have a part in setting goals for its schools. Communities will not likely find a meaningful future until and unless they have chosen that future. This requires that your community go through a process of setting its long-term expectations for its schools.

Second, to achieve those community-specific purposes, the community must take control of what is offered in its community. One curriculum will not fit all. To make your community's purposes happen in your schools, you are probably going to have to increase the involvement of your community in your school program and invite your school to participate more fully in the life of your community.

The following supplemental material will help guide your community into more specific discussions. The first section provides an annotated listing of groups that currently are actively addressing specific areas of reform. The next section describes some stategies for how you can help your teachers get good training. This is followed by guidelines and questions to assist your discussions of school values. And lastly is more background material on the growth of intelligence. Please let us know if you have ideas for further additions.

EXTRAS

How to Find New Approaches to Old Subjects

The programs listed below are involved in developing new curriculums, distributing them, and training teachers to use them. In addition, state education departments and most school administrators have knowledge about training opportunities in your area. You can also consult the Appendix list: Organizations that will help you—they may not offer training, but they can help you find it.

A little bit of homework will help you identify a high quality program to meet your needs, so don't automatically settle for the first program you find. Training programs of every description are also featured in *Education Week*, ("American Education's Newspaper of Record") Box 2084, Marion, OH 43305-2084 ($49.94 for 40 issues).

Programs That Cover All Areas of the Curriculum

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)
1250 North Pitt St.
Alexandria, VA 22314-1403
(703) 549-9110

Foxfire Teacher Outreach
P.O. Box B
Rabun Gap, Georgia 30568
(404) 746-5318
Director: Hilton Smith

Foxfire Teacher Networks offer training and support for teachers interested in practicing the Foxfire approach to instruction (see Chapter V). As of Summer, 1991, Foxfire Teacher Outreach included teacher networks in Georgia, West Virginia, Tennessee, Maine, New York, Idaho, Kentucky, North Carolina, Florida, Neveda, and Washington, with more on the way.

National Diffusion Network
U.S. Department of Education
OERI-Recognition Division
555 NJ Ave., N.W.
Washington D.C. 20208-5465
(202) 219-2153
Acting Director: Linda Jones

The National Diffusion Network selects successful educational programs from around the country and helps schools learn about and implement them. Schools can choose from over 400 exemplary programs to meet their specific needs, philosophy, and resources. Programs are rigorously tested before they are accepted by the Network. The national office can tell you how to contact your state coordinator, who can help you select programs for your particular situation, find training for your teachers, and solve problems along the way.

For copies of *Educational Programs That Work*, National Diffusion Network's complete curriculum list:
Sopris West
Box 1809
Longmont, CO 80502-1809
(303) 651 - 2829

National Center for the Paideia Program
Campus Box 8040
The University of North Carolina
Chapel Hill, NC 27599
(919) 962-7379

The Paideia program is especially known for training teachers to lead in-depth discussions based on real books (as opposed to basal readers and text books). Paideia works across the curriculum and with all grade levels.

Subject Areas

Geography Education Progam
National Geographic Society
Box 37138
Washington, D.C. 20077-4567
(To order Teacher's Handbook for $10.00 call 1
(800) 921 -1330

International Reading Association
800 Barksdale Rd.
Box 8139
Newark, DE 19714-8139
(302) 731-1600

Joint Council of Economic Education
432 Park Avenue South
New York, NY 10016
(212) 685-5499

You may have a state affiliate of this organization, whose purpose is to encourage the study of economics at all educational levels and by all groups of citizens.

National Writing Project
School of Education
University of California
Berkeley, CA 94720
(415) 642-0963
Director: James Gray

Many states have state coordinators and programs. The writing project uses trained classroom teachers to train other teachers in the writing process approach. You may be able to find a trainer to come to your school and work with several of your teachers at once.

There is a research arm related to the Writing Project at the same address called Center for the Study of Writing and Literacy.

National Science Foundation
Instructional Materials Development
1800 G Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20550
(202) 357-5000
Program Director: Alice Moses

National Science Teachers Association
1742 Connecticut Ave. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20009
(202) 328-5800
Director: James Rutherford

National Council for the Social Studies
3501 Newark St. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20016
(202) 966-7840
Executive Director: Fran Haley

National Center for Research in Mathematical
Sciences Education
University of Wisconsin
1025 West Johnson Street
Madison, WI 53706
(608) 263-1955
263-4285
Director: Thomas Romberg

High Schools

Coalition of Essential Schools
Brown University
One Davol Square
Providence, RI 02903
(401) 863-3384
Contact: Lisa Lasky, Manager, Information Center

The Coalition's work is based on nine educational principles derived from a five-year study of American high schools. It takes a comprehensive approach to re-examining the way high schools work. Coalition staff work with clusters of teachers from a school, rather than with individual teachers. Contact them for copies of the principles on which they base their work and for advice about how to proceed if you are interested in joining them.

Rural Entrepreneurship through Action Learning (REAL)
REAL Enterprises, Inc.
P.O. Box 1643
Athens, Georgia 20601
(404) 546-9061
Dr. Paul F. DeLargy

REAL Enterprises is a national non-profit organization with resources for helping to establish student operated development enterprises nation wide. The program currently encourages and assists participants at rural high schools and community colleges in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia.

Grade Schools

North American Montessori Teachers' Association
11424 Bellflower Rd.
Cleveland, OH 44106
Executive Director: David Kahn

Note: Montessori is not just for private schools. Kahn is particularly interested in supporting its expansion into the public schools.

Community Education

National Center for Community Education
1017 Avon St.
Flint, MI 48503
(313) 238 - 0463
Contact: Shane Teideman

The Community Education Center offers free-of-charge 10 day training programs for those interested in developing community-wide educational programs. Participants pay a small registration fee and their transportation to the Center in Flint; all other costs are covered by the center.

Teacher Training

One of the most important contributions a community group can make toward improving a school is to support and arrange for training opportunities for teachers. That said, let us follow it immediately with this caution: Make all training voluntary and responsive to teacher interests.

You have a right to ask that your teachers keep up with professional developments. On the other hand, change takes time. Asking someone else to change requires respect for their starting point, their reservations, and their right to choose whether to change. Change in your school depends very heavily on the teachers. They need to have a chance to think through their opinions and reservations about new professional methods.

"The writing process does not fit into teacher-led, whole-class methods of instruction. Unfortunately, that is the only kind of teaching approach many teachers know."

—Calkins, p. 19.

Robert McClure, director of the Mastery in Learning program of the National Education Association uses three questions to start discussions in schools.

1. What is so wonderful about this school that should never be changed?

2. What is wrong with this school that everybody knows it is wrong and it should be changed tomorrow?

3. What is wrong with this school, but we do not know how to change it?

These questions are discussed first in pairs and then in clusters of three pairs. McClure observes that as people stick with these questions, their answers change and deepen, "like peeling off layers of the onion until the tears come." (Restructuring...)

What You Can Do?

1. Support the idea of high-quality teacher training as a top priority for school funds and time. Inform yourself and others about these new approaches to learning and about what others are doing. Talk about them so teachers know you are supportive and that you want to see them in your child's school.

2. Raise money to help pay for training opportunities.

3. Write grant applications to fund training opportunities. State education departments, the federal government, private foundations, and organizations interested in specific subject matter all have grant programs for training teachers. There is probably someone in your school district or region whose job it is to keep track of such programs, and who can help you get started. The teachers themselves may know of opportunities, but just do not have time to apply.

4. Nominate your teachers for training opportunities, awards, and special programs run by special interest organizations. Again, search your district for people who know about these options, call the professional organizations and agencies listed in the appendix.

5. When you know your teachers have been exposed to some of these new approaches, volunteer in the classroom so that teachers have time to plan new kinds of lessons. Offer to help a teacher try something new. Get teachers and parents together to discuss how the parents can help.

6. Purchase books and videotapes about new approaches to learning for the teachers' reference library.

7. Research training opportunities in your area and supply your teachers with a list.

8. Look into developing a partnership with a university that can provide ongoing, school-based help for teachers making changes.

9. Offer to "host" local training events, providing a comfortable space and refreshments for teachers and their trainer(s). It shows teachers you appreciate their extra effort. It may also relieve the tension some feel when trying something new.

10. Sponsor parent discussions to answer questions about proposed changes. Ask teachers to suggest other ways that you can help explain changes to questioning parents.

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Guidelines for a Community Discussion of School Values

Select a person to lead this discussion, someone who is both a proven group discussion leader and someone you know from past experience does not try and force their values onto others.

Set a time for the end of the discussion—we suggest two hours.

Set some rules for the discussion, rules like: Do not take or say things personally. Do not speak for more than two minutes at a time. Agree on a procedure for the discussion. We suggest the following, which are based on the rules of brainstorming:

1. Go around the room giving everyone a chance to speak; write every idea on the board; you may elaborate someone else's idea, but you may not criticize or argue with it (if you disagree, you simply state an opposing idea which is included in the list).

2. With everyone's input, group the ideas by type.

3. With everyone's input, remove ideas that are repetitive.

4. Discuss the remaining ideas to see if everyone agrees.

5. Rank those ideas in order of importance.

Then you have to decide whether your school/community is teaching these values. Once again, there will likely be disagreement.

After the discussion you will have, perhaps for the first time, taken a big step toward one of the most important things that your school can teach if the purpose of the school is to strengthen your community. You will need to do this from time to time and with many different groups of people.

Questions for Community Discussion

Should school give us the facts we need for life? Did it? How?

Should school strengthen our personalities so we can deal with the pressures and challenges of life? Did it? How?

Should school give us skills we need in life? Did it? How? How have the skills needed in life changed?

Should school help us get jobs? Did it? How? Have those jobs changed? How?

Should what we learned in school help us be happier? Did it? How?

Should what we learned in school make us wiser? Did it? How?

Did what we learned in school help us be better parents? Better community members? Better citizens? How?

The Growth of Intelligence

Children learn by doing. This simple fact is supported by common sense, by research in the fields of psychology and education, and by recent studies of the physical growth of the brain. It is true of pre-school children, but it is also true, in different ways and degrees, of high school students.

"Explaining things to children won't do the job; they must have the chance to experience, wonder, experiment, and act it out for themselves. It is this process, throughout life, that creates the growth of intelligence."

—Healy, p. 41.

Adult thinking means being able to think internally rather than having to "act out." But it is only achieved through thousands of opportunities to "act out" thought, collecting and organizing information into new levels of understanding.

When we limit a child's active, physical involvement with learning, we get in the way of developing intelligence.

We seem to have forgotten this simple reality when we organize our classrooms into rows of desks, our students time into fragments, and our students product into worksheets.

For too long our instructional methods have emphasized "pouring in" knowledge. Our dominant method of teaching and of organizing classrooms has emphasized passivity and content coverage rather than the student's dynamic learning process. To meet the demands of this age and to reflect modern knowledge of the learning process, we need to change the way our classrooms work.

At birth, the human brain has already developed most of its billions of cells. Still, the brain may as

much as double in weight in the first year of life. During that year, and for many years following, the brain is organizing itself. It is forming the receptors and the connections between cells that enable it to process information. *(continued)*

Steps Along the Way: Brain Development and Learning

"Many things which seem ridiculously obvious to adults are not clear to children.... One well-known experiment starts with two identical glasses of liquid. After the child has agreed that there is the same amount in both glasses, the experimenter pours one glassful into a taller, thinner container and asks, 'Now, do these have the same amount or does one have more water?' Children below the age of seven often state assuredly that the tall one has 'more,' because the level of water makes it look that way. I have tried endlessly repouring and explaining, thinking a child understood because he was kind enough to say what I wanted, but the next day the tall one still had 'more.'

How do children get to the stage where they understand these relationships? I am willing to blame a certain amount of neural readiness, but it is clear that they must practice and experiment with hundreds of examples."

—Healy, pp. 60,61.

"How long does the brain's childhood last? The beginning of mature reasoning does not occur until sometime after age eleven or twelve, when the frontal lobes finally become the 'boss' of the cortex. Until then, thinking has certain limits. It is natural for children to be literal thinkers, stuck in their own point of view....Since the frontal lobes also seem to control much of what we call 'motivation,' a child usually has trouble planning for far-off goals or developing and executing a plan of action. Nevertheless, I frequently see parents (and teachers) who lament, 'I don't understand why she is so unmotivated—she doesn't seem to see why this is so important!' "

—Healy, p. 64.

"I must continually remind myself that these young adult (eighth grade) bodies contain brains that are far from "finished" by adult standards. Teachers are perpetually amazed at the way kids 'get it together' sometime around tenth or eleventh grade—which should be no surprise if their prefrontal lobes are still myelinating.

As one who teaches the same students at several points during their school years, I know that for months I can beat my head (and theirs) against the wall of an inappropriate objective, only to find that, two years later, they learn it in an hour."

—Healy, pp. 121,122.

"Every response to sights, sounds, feelings, smells, and tastes makes more connections. Like a pathway through a forest, the neural traces are at first faint, then, with successive trips, the trail becomes more distinct and easier to traverse. The weight and the thinking power of the brain increase in an elaborate geometric progression. The more work the brain does, the more it becomes capable of doing."

—Healy, p. 19.

An important process in brain development is the coating of the brain's message-carriers (called axons) with a fatty substance called myelin. This coating enables messages to flow more efficiently. What a person can do is determined, in part, by which parts of his or her brain have myelinated. For example, in newborns the lower brain centers responsible for reflexive sucking are well developed, while the center responsible walking is not yet myelinated. The process of myelination continues throughout childhood and adolescence, for roughly twenty years.

Most adults are highly sensitive to the idea of physical readiness in very young children. No one expects a newborn to walk or talk. But not everyone realizes that developing these abilities has to do with physical changes in the brain as well as with skeletal and muscular growth. An older child's mastery of big skills like walking and talking may mask the fact that the child's brain is still physically immature.

This immaturity, continuing well into adolescence, accounts for differences between child thinking and adult thinking. The "mind workings" of a 7- or 10-year-old child, whose outward speech and behavior resembles that of an adult, actually differs significantly from an adult's. This difference is not only a matter of differences in experience or exposure to information, it also has to do with

physical immaturity in the brain, and with how that brain grows. In other words, children's minds are not just smaller or emptier versions of adults' minds, waiting to be filled. They are organs that grow and change as children use them. How children's minds grow has enormous implications for how our schools should work.

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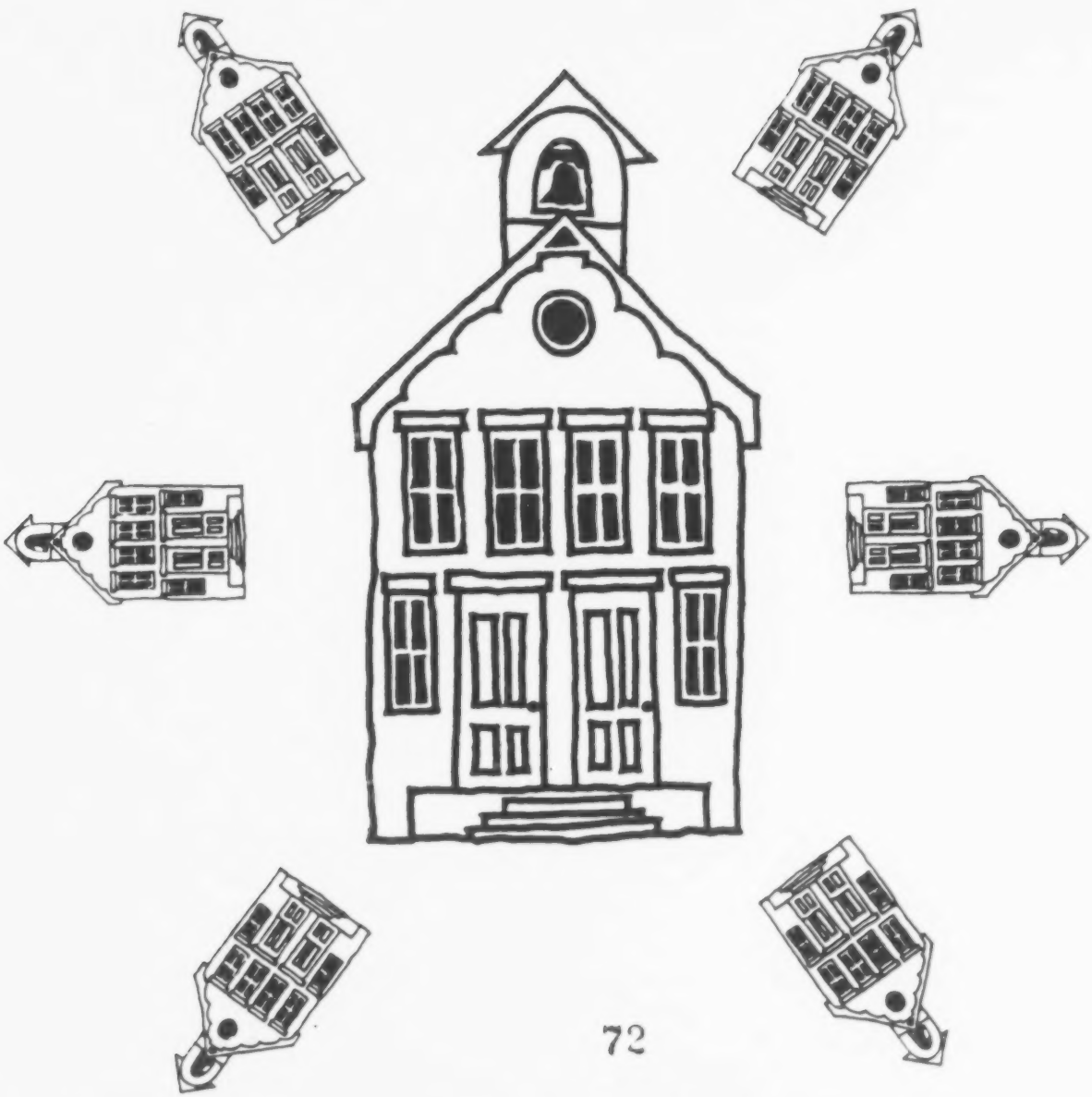
CHAPTER III
Small By Choice: Wrestling with Consolidation



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School consolidation has been the norm of the 20th century.

—DeYoung and Smith, p. 3

Throughout the 20th century, American schools and school districts have been combined and re-combined into ever larger units. This century-long school consolidation process corresponds closely to the Industrial Age and its characteristics: centralization, specialization, and standardization. This has come to be called the "scientific management era," and its password is efficiency.

During this era, small schools have been roundly criticized as deficient—too small to be efficient in purchasing equipment and supplies, too small to afford and to use education specialists, too small to offer a diverse curriculum, too isolated to offer social stimulation, too small and isolated to retain well-trained teachers, too poor to pay adequate teacher salaries. These deficiencies so thoroughly violate the values of scientific management, and those values have been so widely accepted, that many people just automatically assume that small rural schools are inferior and cannot be fixed. Clearly, with all these negatives, a small rural school cannot offer a good education or produce competent students.

Hogwash! Small rural schools can offer a good education and produce competent students. What they can't do in a cost-efficient manner is to look and act like smaller versions of comprehensive metropolitan schools. Small schools must achieve excellence by methods specially suited to them—methods that emphasize their strengths and minimize their weaknesses. A major premise of this book is that social and economic change, school

reform, and modern communication systems combine to create an atmosphere in which small rural schools can contribute more to their students and their communities than ever before. But first of all, schools must know what community they are serving, and by what criteria they will be judged.

Consolidation is one of the most difficult and yet common decisions small schools face. Citizens frequently see consolidation more as a force bearing down upon them than as a choice. But this chapter shows that there is a wide range of options related to this issue. But first, you must decide to take hold of the issue and understand it, rather than simply choosing sides.

Taking hold of the consolidation issue means informing yourself about the relationship between school size and quality of program, about what affects student achievement (what they learn) and attainment (how far they advance through the education system), and about the financial factors affecting rural schools.

"Citizens can be effective, forceful participants in school district decision making in response to declining enrollment, including closing schools if necessary. To be effective, however, they must help define the issues of declining enrollment as affecting the educational opportunities of all district children. They must become as convinced of the need for change and as knowledgeable about issues and options as school administrators and board members."

—Bussard, p. ix.

Alternative to Consolidation
• Mixed Age Classes •
"At the secondary level, this strategy is often used to offer more courses, in alternate years, than could be offered each year, by opening classes to students in several grades. It is usually a strategy for maintaining curricular strength in elective areas."

—Bussard, p. 31.

If you seriously wish to offer your students a solid, modern education, you must study your situation objectively. Acknowledge your school's weak spots, identify its strengths, seek options open-mindedly, and develop plans that are tailored to your community's unique blend of need, circumstance, and values.

Before we go any further, we need to point out a distinction between consolidation as a local issue and consolidation as a state policy. Consolidation commonly arises within a community because it has already been adopted as a policy on the state level. States do not necessarily articulate this policy directly; they may even deny such a policy. But where there are financial incentives and special services offered to districts or schools that consolidate, where there is a funding formula that favors larger schools, where there are guidelines for optimal school size, where there is undue attention paid to certain large schools as "models" for the state, there is a consolidation agenda on the state level.

"A group consisting only of those who will be most directly affected tends to have a low level of credibility, perceived, as they are, to be fighting for their own narrow interests, probably at the expense of broader district interests. This perception is likely to be shared by the board of education, by other community residents, and by state officials and courts of law."
Bussard, p. vii.

The state is responsible for delivering education services as fairly as possible and for ensuring the quality of education. Furthermore, it bears most of the responsibility for funding the education system. The state's right to create policies toward these ends cannot be challenged. But the appropriateness of consolidation as a policy certainly can be challenged. States adopt such a policy because many policymakers are convinced that school consolidation saves money and improves schools. They do not automatically perceive the issue from a community perspective. You can help to clarify for policymakers the real effects of their policies, and suggest alternatives. (See the end of this chapter for a brief discussion on you, the state, and policymaking.)

What does consolidation on the state agenda mean for you on the local level? Depending on the degree of pressure from the state, it is likely to mean one or more of the following:

- Your local board may be under extreme pressure to follow the state's agenda, regardless of local opinion or the specifics of your local situation.

• Your community will be inclined to polarize over this issue rather than to take the time and effort to study what is best for your situation.

• Through creating the agenda, those who favor consolidation will have a powerful advantage over those who wish to study the situation and those who oppose consolidation.

• It may be necessary to challenge state-level assumptions in order to create a climate in which local deliberations can proceed openly and creatively.

• It is up to your community to do your local homework, relating your particular situation to the policy. By their very nature, statewide policies do not account for unique local considerations.

A state policy that promotes consolidation will likely mask the difference between issues directly related to school size and issues related to ruralness. A study of small schools in New York, for instance, concludes that "None of the organizational alternatives we studied can eliminate the extra cost of providing education in rural settings." *(Monk and Haller, p.6)* In other words, providing services to sparse populations has added costs, and consolidating schools doesn't change that.

Alternative to Consolidation
• Sharing Personnel •
"Principals, guidance counselors, and special subject teachers, such as art and music, can be shared by two or more small district schools. This can provide administrative supervision and program strength that could not be justified full time for each school, while retaining teachers and administrators in a fulltime capacity in their areas of expertise."

—Bussard, p. 31.

Consolidation on the Local Level

Consolidation on the local level involves an overwhelming array of issues: the role of the school as a social center, whose jobs might be affected and how, the school as a "big spender" in the local economy, parents' concern for the well-being of their children, power struggles between interest groups, and differing opinions about what constitutes a good education are only some of them.

Sadly, consolidation commonly divides communities, or drives a wedge of distrust between citizens and education leaders. The likelihood of such division will be lessened if the community is able to talk through the issues over time, slowly building a shared sense of the community's best interests. We offer the rest of this chapter to help guide community discussion.

"In communities which have successfully handled declining enrollment, the ground rules for developing and recognizing acceptable solutions have been established before specific actions are proposed. While a great deal of public debate can be anticipated when establishing the ground rules, once they have been established and have broad community support, solutions are easier to find."

—Bussard, p.10.

"Citizen pressure exerted towards creating an open and fair process for achieving solutions is much more effective than pressure exerted towards a predetermined solution."

—Bussard, p.10.

This chapter is written primarily to help you assess your local situation. It is not about how to organize for action, either on the state or local level. But the information provided here should help you challenge questionable assumptions about school quality wherever you find them.

Whether consolidation involves a school or a school district, the issues on which people build their arguments are roughly the same. Those who favor consolidation stress financial efficiency, improvement of facilities, and increased breadth of course offerings. Those who oppose consolidation stress small class size, school climate, and student participation in school activities (which has been linked to student performance).

School Consolidation and School Reform

School consolidation is often promoted in the name of school reform. According to researchers David Monk and Emil Haller, school reform concerns can be roughly divided into "hard" and "soft" issues. "Hard" issues include the demand for higher test scores, more course offerings, increased accountability for professional staff and higher teacher salaries. "Soft" reform issues focus more on the social aspects of schooling, including reducing drop-out rates, greater cooperation among teachers and administrators, increased parent involvement, and decentralized decision making.

Hard or Soft

"The 'hard' and 'soft' themes in the reform movement have different implications for the future of small rural schools....In some quarters there is a widespread and deeply entrenched belief that large size is a prerequisite for a cost-effective, diverse, and specialized curriculum. Moreover, there is a parallel belief that greater standardization and accountability follow from dividing a state into a small number of similarly organized, relatively large units. According to this belief, the fewer districts, the better for the sake of exercising state oversight. Thus expanding educational offerings and making educators more accountable to the state—that is, the 'hard' dimension of the reform movement—is very much consistent with a 'larger is better' point of view.

In sharp contrast, researchers have concluded that large schools have adverse effects on certain aspects of the education and social development of youth.... It has become clear that students in smaller schools participate more actively in the extra-curriculum, have better self-concepts, and exhibit lower levels of alienation. Moreover, there is some evidence that smaller schools are more closely tied to their communities and operate with less hierarchical, more collegial decision making structures that do their larger counterparts.

Thus, the two central themes of the modern school reform movement have contradictory implications for the future viability of small rural schools.

We conclude that the modern reform movement sends two inconsistent messages regarding school district size. By ... endorsing an expansion of academic opportunities through increasing graduation requirements, the 'hard' side of the movement tacitly supports the further consolidation of small rural school districts. However, by simultaneously stressing the importance of the social outcomes of schooling, the necessity of a cooperative, caring climate, and the need for vastly increased parent involvement, its 'soft' side helps to undercut the case for consolidation."

—Monk and Haller, p.471-472.

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"It will be ironic if the current reform effort is captured by state bureaucrats and used for a largely discredited purpose, the further consolidation of small rural schools. Few current reformers have given much thought to the implications of their recommendations for the issue of school size. Those who have considered size do not view large schools as a desirable goal. We suspect that this is also true of those who are mute on the matter. Further, while the effect of school size on many educational outcomes is problematic, it is least so in regard to reform's 'soft' objectives. That is, large, complex and bureaucratic schools are inimicable to the social and moral goals sought by reformers. It would be sadly ironic, then, were a successful reform movement to spawn in the nation's small rural schools some of the very pathologies that the reformers were seeking to cure."

—Monk and Haller, p.481

"A community has to know the constraints on its choices: the costs and consequences of various options, the connections between one particular choice and other choices. And it must know these things in the context of the different meanings facts have for differing people. Much of this kind of knowledge is not available from experts; people have to learn it from one another."

—Matthews and McAfee, p. 16.

One reason that those who oppose consolidation often lose the political fight may be that they do not adequately address the "hard" issues emphasized by the other side—the number of course offerings, the costs, and so forth. Instead, they base their arguments on other issues—the so-called "soft" aspects of schooling, issues such as teacher-student relationships, individual attention, decentralized decision making, and school climate. While these issues are also important, they do not convince the "hard issues" people that their concerns have been taken seriously.

A politically strong case for retaining schools in small communities, therefore, needs to handle the "hard" school reform issues directly and creatively. Research cited in this chapter challenges some of the assumptions behind school improvement through consolidation. The chapter on technology suggests some ways to enhance course offerings, as do some of the alternatives listed in this chapter. These alternatives also include cost-cutting or cost-sharing options. Throughout this

book runs the theme that school finance issues cannot be separated from community finances. Thus, we would suggest that some of the "hard" issues are not being considered in their full and proper context. For example, removing schools from local communities may save some costs, particularly in the short run, but may also remove potential for community revitalization, which would pay off in the long run.

Consolidation and Research Findings

Research on the issues related to consolidation can help you sort out truth and assumption. Of course, most communities are not going to make their decisions solely on the basis of research data, nor should you. You must also consider the goals and values of your community, and how the research relates to your particular situation. Research can help you get beyond the unexamined assumptions that crop up in most school consolidation battles. It can help you explore what will really best serve your community needs.

The following section of research findings on some of the major factors in consolidation discussions can help you do this. The section after this contains questions to help relate your specific situation to research about rural schools and good education.

Alternative to Consolidation
• Changing Boundaries •
"School attendance boundaries can be adjusted to relieve crowding in one school and make use of available space in another school, when a community has uneven distribution of growth and decline....If a district can provide strength in a special program area through consolidating the program into fewer schools, attendance may be based on geographic clusters or enrollment may be open to all students in the district. Parents would then have the option of enrolling their children in any one of the schools offering a special program of interest."
—Bussard, p. 30.

"We have followed a lot of consolidation efforts at a lot of high schools over the years. The only consistent conclusion we can draw is that consolidation results in more courses, not in improved educational quality."
—John Bell, senior admissions officer, Guilford College.

Breadth of Course Offerings

One common justification for consolidating schools is the assumed need to expand high-school course offerings. Research on small schools in New York indicates that:

1. The effects of school size on course offerings varies from subject to subject. Greater school size has less impact on social studies and science than on foreign language and the performing and visual arts. Also, in most subjects advanced courses grow more rapidly with school size than do remedial courses.

2. Increases in the size of very small schools are associated with greater curriculum gains than increases in the size of larger schools. Increasing from 100 to 200 students may make a big difference in curriculum; increasing from 200 to 400 may make little difference.

3. Quite apart from size and ruralness, high schools vary considerably in curricular offerings. There are small schools with rich curricula and large schools with modest curricula.

Thus, while breadth of course offerings is a serious issue, you need to be aware that there is no simple relationship between school size and courses offered. Furthermore, offering a greater number of courses is only marginally related to offering a good education.

Why Do More Courses Relate Only Marginally to Good Education?

Research shows little correlation between student achievement and number of course offerings. Among the larger schools that offer many different courses, there is wide variation in what courses are offered. In many cases, additional course offerings are not advanced placement courses in core academic subjects. Relatively few students

Alternative to Consolidation
• Part-time Teachers •

"When declining enrollment results in need for fractional teachers, part-time positions can be created....These positions may be appealing to existing teachers who want to reduce their teaching load, perhaps in preparation for retirement or career change. Part-time positions may also appeal to new people who want flexible working schedules. Most school districts need to change policies and contracts to include non-salary benefits (health, seniority, retirement) in order to make part-time employment viable."

—Bussard, p. 32.

take advantage of the additional courses. "Indeed, in the largest high schools we studied, never did more than 12% of the students enroll in courses that are denied to their peers in the smallest high schools." *—Monk and Haller, p. 59.*

"Secondary school curricula have been homogenized, diluted and diffused to the point that they no longer have a central purpose. In effect, we have a cafeteria-style curriculum in which the appetizers and desserts can easily be mistaken for the main courses."
—A Nation at Risk, *p. 18.*

Furthermore, nothing guarantees that more course offerings lead to a well-coordinated curriculum in which one course leads directly to another and the overall program fits together—a well-balanced meal as opposed to a smorgasbord. While a smorgasbord may have all of the necessary elements, any given student's selections may not add up to a well-balanced whole.

And finally, number of courses taught has no relationship to the quality of instruction. Challenging students widely and deeply with fewer well-taught courses may offer your students more than many courses taught superficially.

What Does This Research on Course Offerings Mean for You?

All of this suggests that "number of courses offered" is too vague a yardstick for evaluating your program. You need, instead, to assess your actual offerings against State requirements, against core programs in other schools, and against the expectations of colleges. Are you indeed lacking key academic content, such as foreign languages and advanced math and science? You need to specify what additional courses you need. You need to examine the coordination (curriculum articulation) of your current offerings, and how the ones you propose to add will fit in. You should take a look at the degree of choice open to individual students and the counseling available to them in making those choices. Students will not get the most you have to offer if they are permitted to avoid a core academic program. You need to ask whether the quality of your program is fairly consistent. If not, are all key areas at least adequate? Finally, you will need to look at scheduling—in very small schools, a student who

misses a key course one year may not have another chance at it, or you may find that two important courses conflict, forcing students to choose one or the other.

With this information in hand, you can consider ways to meet your program needs, one of which may be consolidation. But there are others.

Skills Across the Curriculum

One way to enhance your curriculum without actually adding courses is to encourage the teaching of key skills in multiple areas of the curriculum. Writing is a good example. Traditionally taught only as a unit of English, writing is pertinent to all areas of study. Rather than adding advanced writing courses to your curriculum, you can enhance writing instruction in your school by training teachers to include a writing component in all course work. Public speaking, conversation, reasoning, analysis, critical thinking and research skills can be strengthened in this manner without adding courses to your list. Clearly, Calculus or French IV cannot be offered this way because these involve high level, specialized information. But if you develop strong learning and thinking skills across your current curriculum, your students will be prepared to tackle specific, high-level subject matter when they encounter it in college.

Expanding Your Curriculum

There are many ways to expand your curriculum once you break the mold of your standard, everyday high-school class model. At the most sophisticated end of the scale are interactive, long-distance courses brought to the local classroom by technology. These programs are often offered through regional education agencies of the state. Private businesses increasingly promote and support such programs as well. Availability varies around the country, but is well worth your while to investigate what may be planned for your area

over the next decade. These kinds of services are expanding rapidly.

Similarly, independent providers now offer a seductive array of satellite courses. All you need is a dish and some cash. Unfortunately, for small, rural schools strapped for funds, these courses may prove to be quite expensive. In addition to the hardware, you must pay the provider for the course. And some states require that a fully certified teacher be in the classroom with students who are taking such a course. Thus, while you add to your offerings, you have both the cost of your local teacher and the cost of the course.

Like other technologies, computer-based instruction is expanding rapidly, and schools are more likely to have computers than satellite dishes. At the very least, students can learn to type from the computer, perhaps freeing teacher time for other activities.

Don't let the lure of technology cause you to overlook simpler options. Conversational languages can be taught through use of tapes. While these may not constitute a free-standing language course, they might enable you to share a language teacher with another school or schools, with the students in each school working independently part of each week.

A number of universities offer correspondence courses. These come at a fraction of the cost of technology-based instruction.

Finally, don't overlook independent study. Motivated learners at every level of study teach themselves a great deal. With the advent of such aids as videos and computerized libraries, independent study becomes easier and easier. Citizens in your community might have the ability to supervise a given student's work, perhaps overseen by a certified teacher.

Alternative to Consolidation
• Flexible Staffing •
"If a district has teachers who are capable and willing to teach in more than one subject area, and at more than one grade span, it has enormous flexibility in meeting changing needs during declining enrollment. This long-range strategy would include training in new areas (or refresher training in rusty areas) for existing staff and policies for hiring new staff with multiple certifications."

—Bussard, p. 32.

CAUTION: All of these options have one thing in common: they are based on an absent authority providing the content of the course. Since classrooms are based on teachers providing not only the content but also the standards and discipline for a class, the listed options do not do the whole job. To expand your program in these ways requires that you establish a way of managing independent course work that meets your standards. For example, a teacher could be assigned to this area. In cases of true independent study, the teacher would help the students devise their course, including selecting readings, a course project or paper, and standards of evaluation. For technology-based study or correspondence students, the teacher would serve as an advisor, answering questions and following the students' progress. A room set aside for these activities might have students studying many different subjects at once, the teacher moving from group to group as needed.

Student Achievement

As already noted, no research has yet linked student achievement to any particular size of school. The factors that most consistently affect student achievement are those related to family back-ground, such as socio-economic status of the family and levels of education reached by the parents. Research suggests that small and large schools accomplish good education differently, and that each has merits and problems.

From research in New York—"...students from small schools score, on average, well above the State mean. If anything, the data ... would support the argument that the highest quality programs are to be found in the smallest school districts .... Indeed, if the State accepted competency tests as an index of program quality (and hence the need to reorganize), it should provide financial incentives for breaking up larger districts, not merging together small ones."

—Monk and Haller, p.54.

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From research in Nebraska—"...when you consider the fact that the graduates from small rural schools represent a lower income, less "elite", less "well-prepared" group than the young people taking the ACT from the larger schools, it looks like the deck is stacked against these country kids. But then, one sees the actual results. Consider, for example the distribution of ACT scores among the freshman class that entered the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in the autumn of 1985. Amazingly, they reveal that the highest average ACT scores were attained by graduates of the three smallest groups of schools."

—Sher, Class Dismissed, p. 24.

Doing a Few Things Well

"The search for a reasonable set of core courses is one of the hallmarks of the current education reform movement nationwide. It is fascinating to see both conservative documents (from U.S. Education Secretary William Bennett's ideal curriculum for 'James Madison High School,' to Mortimer Adler's *Paideia Proposal*) and liberal reports (from Theodore Sizer's *Horace's Compromise* to *The Shopping Mall High School* by Powell et al.) all united by their call for a narrower, more unified and focused curriculum....

Although they (and the other major reform leaders) differ considerably on the specific content, no one is advocating the idea that more courses, more options, more tracks and more of a 'cafeteria' approach to curriculum will enhance educational quality. This emerging national consensus on the need for a leaner, stronger curriculum .... means that small rural high schools, in particular, can no longer be complacent about the 'gaps' in their ability to provide students with first-rate instruction in all essential areas.... Most important, however, this trend in educational reform should give small rural schools a new lease on life and a renewed sense of their own capacity for educational excellence.... Small, rural schools should thrive in an era that honors a limited, focused, well-rounded curriculum.... When a premium is placed on doing a few things well, rather than trying to be all things to all people, small rural schools are in a position to compete successfully with larger systems—and to excel."

—Sher, Class Dismissed, p. 15

From research in Oklahoma on the effects of long bus rides—"If all other variables are held constant, each hour a day spent riding a bus would be predicted to reduce achievement scores by 4.0 points for 8th grade students."

—Tu and Tweeten

On the effects of family background—
"...socioeconomic factors such as parents' income and education are still the best predictors of students' achievement, rather than school size or resources."

—DeYoung and Smith, p. 6.

On the related issue of extracurricular participation—"...students in the smaller high schools actually participated more fully in both the academic and extracurricular life of their institutions. In fact, the number of extracurricular activities and kinds of activities engaged in during their four-year high school careers was twice as great in the small as in the large schools. Finally, the frequency of leadership involvements also favored the small schools, and such findings have been supported with national samples of college students as well."

—DeYoung and Smith, p. 6.

On the effects of school size, in sum—"Whenever school closing is proposed, parents and other citizens begin to search for information about optimum school size and optimum class size. We can perhaps save you a long and frustrating search by saying that the professional literature will not help here. There is no consensus, except that there are advantages and disadvantages to both bigness and smallness, and that there are means for overcoming the disadvantages of each. Of far greater importance are the quality of teachers and educational program, and the degree of care and attention given to individual children."

—Bussard, p.30.

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How Valuable Is Financial Efficiency as an Argument?

While it is highly appropriate for citizens to expect their public school tax dollars be spent efficiently, this concept has often been misapplied to rural schools. Using "inefficient" to describe rural schools suggests that they are being wasteful with their money. The real issue may in fact be that rural schools have certain costs that metropolitan schools do not have because of differences in population density. Short of requiring all people to live in areas of a certain density, these costs simply need to be acknowledged and accepted.

Consider the cases of two adjacent rural counties in West Virginia, similar in size and population density. One county consolidated its schools 20 years ago. The other resists. At the time of this writing, both counties face similar budget shortfalls. Consolidation proponents claim that the non-consolidated county can solve its financial problems and improve its program by consolidating. On the other hand, school board members in the consolidated county say that they have enough money either to bus their students to school or to operate their schools, but not enough money to do both. Rural schools face extra costs for providing services to sparse populations no matter how they organize their schools.

If this is so, why do so many people believe that consolidation solves these money problems? One answer may be that states often provide extra money for schools that consolidate. Consolidation itself is then credited with improving the school's or district's finances. As costs are redistributed under the new organization, the state's extra contribution makes it hard to sort out how the regular, ongoing costs were affected.

By favoring consolidation over other means of improving schools, states create a short-term financial benefit that could just as well be attached

Alternative to Consolidation
•Curriculum and Methods •
"Declining enrollment offers an incentive to review curriculum offerings and teaching methods throughout the district: multi-age groups and teamed teachers, middle school curriculum that is less rigid than the traditional junior high school, individual study, science lab courses that cross disciplinary boundaries, large lecture courses and small seminars where appropriate, individualized language instruction through use of programmed tapes in many languages, new elective courses that combine the most successful components of related courses offered previously. The potential for curriculum renewal which also makes best use of teachers and space is enormous."
—Bussard, p. 33.

to other forms of school improvement. But as long as these benefits are added only to consolidation, districts that try to improve themselves in other ways will not receive these benefits—benefits that may be very real and very visible, such as a new school building. If you thoroughly assess your particular situation, you will be in a position to judge short-term and highly visible benefits against long-term effects on your community.

"In the case of efficiency, we looked at the extensive literature on economies of scale. We concluded that although large schools may offer such economies, they also face diseconomies of scale, and that the point of balance between these two is entirely unclear and idiosyncratic. Perhaps one of the most enduring bits of wishful thinking in the reorganization folklore concerns the notion of an optimal size for school districts. That notion is pure fantasy."

—Monk and Haller, p. 78.

Alternative to Consolidation
• Cooperating Districts •
"Districts may cooperate directly, through jointly hiring teachers or coordinating special programs in host schools. Several districts may form or join a consortium to offer special programs on a regional basis, such as technical and career programs at the high school level or enrichment programs for gifted students. This strategy is somewhat more complex, because it requires working between two or more administrative and legal entities."

—Bussard, p. 34.

Every School is Different

While research demonstrates that smallness is not a reason to assume that a school produces a poor product or operates inefficiently, it is also not a reason to assume that a school is as good as it can be, or even good enough. If research suggests ways in which critics of small schools may be jumping to some false conclusions, research also suggests that such schools do face significant problems, some of them related to size.

"... the same objective conditions—small size and a rural setting—can plausibly and simultaneously lead to quite opposite consequences. For example, if small size causes teachers to get to know their charges better and thereby better meet their needs, it also provides enormously increased opportunities for misjudgments, and for those misjudgments to have seriously harmful effects."

—Monk and Haller, p.12.

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In response to this dilemma, Monk and Haller conclude that the quality of a school's teachers is one key to whether the interpersonal advantages of smallness outweigh the possible disadvantages. A school's ability to attract and retain good teachers depends on many factors—salaries, working conditions, isolation and local hiring practices. But research does not clearly demonstrate what part each of these factors plays in determining the quality of teachers a school can attract. While higher salaries may favor larger size, working conditions may favor smallness. Evaluating your own situation carefully and honestly is probably more instructive than research data on this issue.

The following section is offered as a guide to help you question your own situation. Use these questions to seek out specific information from your school officials and to encourage their thoughtful consideration of all the angles.

Planning

Many communities are asked to judge a proposed consolidation when they have little information about what things will be like afterward. Even those who anticipate significant benefits from consolidation may be vague about the specifics. For example, "more course offerings and more extracurricular activities" does not say what those courses and activities will be. People might support consolidation to get higher-level math courses only to find that other considerations, such as lack of a trained teacher, still put those courses out of reach.

1. Does a plan clearly spell out what people can expect? Who will govern the new school or district? Who will the teachers be? What bus routes will students travel, and how long they will ride each day? What new courses and extra-curricular activities will be offered? What new facilities and equipment will be available to students? Do you know how these and other major decisions will be made?

2. Does a several-year plan spell out the financial effect on your school system in a manner comprehensible to citizens? Does the plan distinguish between the money provided by the state as a reward for consolidating special financial rewards of state-based incentive funding and the regular operating money of the school system? (Confusing these can lead to false expectations about financial well-being in the district.)

3. Has equal effort gone into a non-consolidation alternative plan to see if it can meet your needs?

Alternative to Consolidation
• Sharing Space With Others •
"Sharing surplus space with others can offset the operating costs of school buildings that are not fully needed for regular school purposes, but which can nonetheless provide a good educational program for smaller numbers of pupils. Likely users of space can also often enrich the educational program and benefit the community. For example, day-care programs and senior citizen programs need space like that available in schools, and rarely available elsewhere. In the case of day-care centers in high schools, students studying child care can gain practical experience by helping to run the centers. Senior citizens based in schools often get involved with student projects and classes. Artists or dancers—or computer consultants—can use school space and provide educational experience to students. The municipal recreation department can use school space, and provide after-school programs to students.

As the percentage of taxpayers and voters with children in school continues to decline below 40 percent, sharing space for other community purposes which broadens the clientele using schools may be very practical politics for the school district to pursue."

—Bussard, p. 34.

4. Does the community realize that available research on school consolidation does not consistently demonstrate particular benefits or detriments of consolidation?

Curriculum Breadth

1. Does your school currently offer a wide enough spectrum of courses to meet state requirements? If not, are there waivers you can claim if you show that you are responsibly addressing curriculum issues?

2. Does your present course of study prepare your children the way you think they should be prepared for the future? Note: If you wonder whether you offer adequate college preparation, call the admissions officers of several colleges. Ask what they want students to be able to *do*, not what courses they should have.

3. What methods are available to you to expand either your offerings, if you feel this is what should be done, or the depth and integration of your curriculum—consolidation, technology, community-based courses, mentorships, clustering with other schools to share particular services, and the like?

4. How effective is each of the above methods at serving *all* of your students? (Note, for example, Monk's research on who takes all of those courses that big schools can offer, and what types of courses they are.)

Improved Facilities Versus Community Ownership of Facilities

1. What do you need in order to offer good education? Can you distinguish between needs and nice extras? Are your needs tied to curriculum

planning and identified educational goals, or to "keeping up with the Joneses?"

2. How can your community enhance the facilities that you already have?

3. How can you supplement your physical plant by using resources already in the community—a town park, community-based instruction, production capabilities at the local newspaper, etc.?

Student Activities

1. Which do you think is more important—a diversity of clubs and teams for extracurricular activity, or a broader participation by your whole student body? (Remember that research shows that students in smaller schools participate more fully in what is offered, even though what is offered may be less diverse.)

2. What extracurricular activities, separate from school, are already active in your community? (for example, a local drama group, 4-H, scouting, or a computer club.) Are there ways that school can recognize and support some of these activities without having to duplicate efforts? Are there ways that these activities can come into the schools?

Overcoming "Small" Problems

Small communities can have a dark side. That which makes smallness personable can also make it stultifying. Small communities can do their children injustice: labeling them, expecting too little of certain children because of the family they were born into, or carrying over old disagreements into new generations.

1. Would consolidation help you overcome labeling problems?

2. Do your students or teachers suffer from social isolation, or lack of exposure to people and places that differ from your community, and therefore lack of perspective on your community? Do your teachers suffer from lack of awareness of new approaches to classroom problems?

3. What other means have you considered to overcome these problems? (For example, with teachers: on-site teacher training to update staff skills and knowledge, hiring practices that bring in "new blood," visits to other schools, access to professional journals, video courses, and computer conferences; and with students: movies, field trips, visiting artists, and student exchanges.)

Teacher Issues

1. Does your school suffer from a high degree of teacher turnover, or conversely, do you need more new teachers with new ideas? How might you change hiring practices and compensation packages to improve this situation?

2. Do your teachers have access to high quality, ongoing staff training? Would consolidation affect this one way or the other?

3. How can you take advantage of community members with special expertise to extend your teaching resources?

Financial Efficiency

1. Do the number favor consolidation when the added hidden costs to the schools and community are figured in?

2. Have you examined the finances, including busing costs, thoroughly and independently?

Local Control

1. What are you prepared to pay for in order to keep your school? Are there bonds or levies you would be willing to pass if it meant you could keep your school?

2. Does your school represent a real community, or one part of a fractured community engaged in a power struggle? Does organizing to save your school change this? Does your community have viability if you work on it?

3. Are you in fact a part of a larger community? If consolidation forces are such that they "win," in what ways can you "own your own consolidation," making it happen the way that suits you best, preparing your students, and claiming your rightful voice in the newly consolidated community?

Transportation

1. What role does transportation play in your discussion of consolidation? Is it a key factor either way?

2. Has someone prepared a plausible, detailed plan that outlines for families what might be expected in terms of changed schedules and length of bus rides?

The transportation issue is usually a "sleeper." Underfunding of special transportation needs may be a key factor driving consolidation pressures. Rural areas, by nature, are going to have higher transportation costs than more densely inhabited areas. A state that funds its schools on a per-student basis without regard to geographically related costs forces some schools to spend operating money on expensive transportation, thus lowering the amount of money available for the educational task. The suggestion then arises that these schools might save money by consolidating. But the extra transportation costs, a result of low population density, exist whether an area consolidates or not.

Food for Thought—The Larger Context of Your Community Education

Very few rural communities are "whole" communities in the self-sufficient way that they might once have been. For example, political disputes on the other side of the globe are affecting the school district where the writer lives, driving up the price of gasoline, and wreaking havoc on the school's transportation budget.

In addition, the community is heavily dependent on one employer, which is controlled, indirectly, from England. Furthermore, the district has a low tax base in part because a high percentage of its land is controlled by the federal government. A Navy communications base in the district produces an ever-changing school population. There are growing numbers of nonresident landowners, and from the resident population, roughly 10% are employed outside the county. Add these factors together and you have a community that is highly affected by non-local influences.

While the above profile is specific to only one school district in one state, virtually every community has a higher degree of involvement with a larger, less predictable sphere than was the case some 50 years ago. Control, local or otherwise, has become a complex issue.

So what?

So, your community has an identity crisis to resolve. This is part and parcel of making decisions about the community school. For example, are you maintaining a community that only exists as a school community, and has no other integrity beyond that bond? If so, do you still wish to maintain it? Can the school become the centerpiece of efforts to create more of a community than already exists?

Or, does your real, active community follow different lines than those that surround the school? Would you be better off to realign your school with the community, so that it truly becomes a community school? Might this, in your case, involve consolidating in some way with another area school?

The Bottom Line—Making Your Decision About Consolidation

Small is different. As you tackle a decision about consolidation, be clear about this. You can't have it both ways. If you want to do things the way large urban schools do, you had better consolidate. But that is not your only option. Small schools can use the strengths of smallness to provide excellent education. In fact, small schools offer the very advantages that large schools now seek to create through "innovative programs" such as a "school within a school" and multi-age student groups. Small schools in a community setting offer the further advantage of being able to use their community and locale as a teaching environment. They have a richer classroom just outside their doors than any indoor classroom anywhere.

Getting there from here requires you to claim your difference from the urban norm, and to train yourselves teachers, community members, administrators and students to do things differently. Modern knowledge about how people learn, current national efforts to restructure schools, growing social interest in more personal, "human-scale" institutions, and national trends toward local, or site-based, decision making all suggest that small, rural schools are entering a new era—an era of promise that can only be fulfilled school by school, community by community.

Beyond Your Community— State Policy, Consolidation, and You

Examining school consolidation on the local level is one thing; on the state level, something else. But because of the effect that state policy has on choices available at the local level, a serious look at this subject will almost always lead, eventually, to state policy.

States turn to consolidation to solve problems. You may feel that this solution creates as many problems as it solves. Nonetheless, if you wish to affect state policy, you will need to have something positive to offer in place of school consolidation, or you will simply be viewed as blocking progress.

While it is beyond the scope of this book to suggest statewide policies, some characteristics of alternative policies are clearly suggested in the book's underlying ideas. In addition, policy recommendations are stated at the conclusion of Monk and Haller's research report to the New York State legislature (see References). A recent book by Robert Stevens (see References) discusses policy options at greater length. And we offer here, as a small starting point, some possible features of a more suitable rural education policy.

1. Where the state's main concern is offering services in an efficient manner, rural education policy could offer communities a wide range of choice, one part of which could be consolidation. But consolidation could be joined by such options as consolidation of community administration and use of schools for delivering of integrated social services. Note that incentives that promote one solution above another inhibit community choice.

Consolidation of community administration involves sharing administration of schools with administration of other social services provided in

small and rural communities. Local boards that oversee these services, such as the board of education, would jointly hire an administrative team to see to the daily provision of services. This approach emphasizes the coherence of the community, in contrast to emphasizing independent sectors of service, such as education and health. This is in contrast to the more common approach of sharing specialized administrations across community lines, as when two communities share one school superintendent.

Many schools already offer a variety of social services, especially those related to public health. Free and reduced lunches, hearing and vision tests, health screening, and fluoride treatments are common examples of this. School-based clinics offering a full range of health care to students go a step farther. State policy could support a community's efforts to find ways of combining inter-related services. This should not be confused with suggesting that the school system take on more and more tasks and responsibilities, but that schools and other services can coordinate with one another, eliminating duplication and offering a more comprehensive package of services to citizens.

2. If the state wants to see increased course offerings in rural schools, its policies should give schools choices for accomplishing this as discussed above, such as independent study and correspondence work. Policies could allow flexible approaches to expanding course offerings (see discussion above). Policies could also encourage the development of technological services and training for teachers. A state might develop centers that provide residential, short-term enrichment options where students would get the benefit of an advanced and specialized curriculum along with exposure to students from other parts of the state. *(See Monk in DeYoung, forthcoming.)*

3. State policies can begin to take advantage of efforts to define appropriate educational results as opposed to inputs. Where results are stated in massive detail, they are as inhibiting as long lists of inputs. But where schools can be judged not by what they have or by what they look like but by what their students can do, communities can find locally suitable ways of achieving high standards.

Rural voices go unheard on the state level because they are few and far between. If you wish to affect state policy, you need to join forces with others across your state. Together you need to define the characteristics of positive rural education policies that you can all promote.

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CHAPTER IV
Your Community as a Focus of Study

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One of the best ways to achieve combined educational and community goals at little cost is to use your community as your school's focus of study. This can be done in many ways.

In Franklin, West Virginia, kindergarten classes make a number of forays into the community every year. They visit a local dentist's office and ride in his fancy chair. They go to the post office and help put letters in boxes. They go to the jailhouse and get fingerprinted. They tour the local shoe factory. They are using their community as a focus of study.

"With the existing curriculum, supported by mass marketed text books, students learn more about how the national government works than their own town council. They are taught about the workings of the Supreme Court to the exclusion of educational attention to the justice of the peace or the county commission.

....If a student knows "gross community product," they will will better understand "gross national product." Being an informed, active citizen of the local community will make them a better citizen of the country. One of the inherent strengths of the rural community and rural school is that these linkages are so accessible to the school—a rich learning environment exists right outside the school walls."

—Nachtigal and Hobbs, 1988, p.21, 22.

The Moab, Utah School District has an Outdoor Education Project which organizes the science curriculum around the natural surroundings of the area. In response to the growing tourism industry, Moab's new science curriculum will be supplemented by two courses, Introduction to Career Marketing and Hospitality Services. A third course on entrepreneurship will be introduced next year. Located near Arches and Canyonlands National Parks, the Moab School District feels that its science curriculum can easily be linked to activities that support local economic development, and is working hard to help students gain the skills needed to start their own businesses.

—Spears et al., 1990.

The Moab district is using its community as a focus of study. Ways to use your community as a focus of study run from kindergarten field trips to full-blown endeavors, such as the Foxfire program

of Rabun, Georgia or school-based enterprises that spin off into independent businesses. (See the next two chapters for more details on such programs.)

Whether you start large or small, any community-based activities you promote will have these benefits in common:

- they will enhance your students' appreciation of their own community;
- they will engage your students in more active, relevant learning; and
- handled thoughtfully, they will increase the community's awareness of its young people—their dreams and their capabilities.

How Community-Based Study Does Not Work

A grade school class tours a local factory. They do not raise questions or discuss the purpose of the trip before they go. The factory is noisy so they can't talk while they are there. A factory employee leads them silently through the factory.

When they are done they get on the bus and go back to school. They talk about their trip for 15-minutes. They do not research answers to their questions. They do not discuss the factory's role in their community's economy. They do not consider what happens to the products made by the factory. They do not draw pictures about it. They do not write stories about it. They have to get on with their workbooks.

While school officials and policymakers chase expensive solutions to modern educational needs, the greatest resource of them all is going to waste—real life in real communities.

How It Can Work

Some small communities suffer for want of newspaper coverage. Imagine a high-school teacher who is concerned about her students' writing ability. This teacher does not have any journalism training *per se*, and does not know how to put together a newspaper. But she does know that people in the community would like more coverage of their community than the regional paper provides.

She suggests to her students that they start an area paper. Together they check out some library books on news writing. For their first assignment, the students divide up the different writing tasks—some cover news events, some write editorials on local issues, some do interviews, etc. They visit the regional newspaper's office to see how it is produced. They invite that paper's editor to visit their class and explain the "flow chart" of a

small paper—who does what in what order to get the paper out on time. They hold a schoolwide naming contest. They ask the parent teacher organization to front the money for the first edition, then solicit subscriptions, and so on.

The community gains:

- its own newspaper,
- in pride and self-knowledge,
- a new small business,
- knowledge of its young people, and
- a pool of individuals trained in important skills, knowledgeable about the community, and willing to serve that community.

Students can also learn:

- the inside of a trade,
- how to begin something they don't know how to do, and how to learn it as they go along,
- interview techniques,
- the role of the press in a democratic society,
- the difference between fact and opinion,
- the laws governing a free press,
- the finances and record keeping of a small business venture,
- the artistic and mathematical skills required to lay out a newspaper, and
- how to edit.

How is this different from a regular high-school newspaper?
In some ways it is not different. But in others it is significantly so. It carries with it all the weight of a real-life venture rather than a "just pretend" venture. For example, the students must carefully present what they say taking libel laws into account, because they are going public with their words. This newspaper involves real financial issues. This newspaper engages these students with their own real community and all of its issues—what better way for them to prepare to be serious citizens within this community? This is not a "hothouse" venture—it is authentic and the students know it is.

Social Studies
The entire grade school social studies curriculum could be a study of your town. The youngest classes study the town by visiting it and talking about it—the dentist, supermarket, courthouse, bank, post office, real estate agency, etc.

Middle-level classes hold mock elections, attend town council meetings, county commission meetings, school board meetings, etc. They follow local issues in the newspaper, and interview family members for their opinions. They chart who makes what decision about the town. They map the town, including physical and economic information, distinguish between residential areas of different economic status, and distinguish major and minor roads.

Students can ask:
"What roles do churches, clubs, or civic organizations play in the community? What town traditions are there?" There is no end to the questions.

History
Then, of course, there are multiple units on local history. A trip to the cemetery—what are the names? Are they the same as now? Have some

disappeared? Are there patterns to death in certain eras (for example, in the earliest years do you see a lot of infant graves, and a lot of women in their childbearing years)?

Science
Science is in your school's backyard: geology, botany, natural history, weather, etc. This could be a discovery curriculum at first, then a mapping and cataloging curriculum, then a research curriculum.

Math
Take the children on comparative shopping trips. Teach them about maps and compasses on the school yard. Map the school yard, then the town. Go out with a local surveyor. Do market calculations for local farm products. Find a business that will show one or two kids at a time how the business finances are kept ....

You get the idea.

Below are some examples of educational programs designed by and for particular communities, to suit their particular needs or to use their particular resources. They are taken from a listing of such programs in "Redesigning Rural Education: Ideas for Action," a publication of the Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory. (See references—The publication lists contact people and telephone numbers for each idea.) Each program could be duplicated in another community, or used to inspire new ideas.

Informal Science Study—ISS starts with a trip to a local field or swamp, athletic event or an afternoon on the playground. What kids experience during these outings is then discussed to provide concrete examples of abstract scientific principles such as motion, acceleration, relativity, magnetic forces, gravity, conservation of energy and frames of reference. ISS also uses experiments with race cars, model rockets, etc.

Coupon Calculation—Math and community service come together in a novel program to increase students' math skills. Students visit senior citizens, compile shopping lists, and purchase groceries. Students use rebate coupons and calculate savings over regular store prices on a weekly basis. The program lasts three months. Not only does this program increase students math skills, but it gives students the opportunity to meet and help the elderly in a meaningful way.

Owen County Elementary School Writing Skills Program—The writing skills program is an ongoing business/community partnership to teach composition, layout and editing to fifth graders. The local newspaper publishes a monthly newspaper page researched, written and illustrated entirely by students. Students also take the photographs and do the layout. Stories cover school experiences, creative writing and features on teachers and students activities.

To Do

After identifying willing adult and student volunteers, create a resource list for your school. State specifically what each person is prepared to do—teach children holiday theme songs, help children plant a garden, run copies two days a week, grade papers, listen to book reports, demonstrate surveying techniques, tell local ghost stories, etc.

Sample Survey Form:

Tip: Have students conduct the survey.

Name_____

Address_____

_____

Phone number: Day_____
Evening_____

Hobbies_____

_____

Where have you traveled?_____

_____

Do you speak a foreign language?_____

If so, which one and how well?_____

_____

What do you do in your job?_____

_____

You may want to include a note like this: "We hope you will be willing to enrich the life of our school with your interests and talents and life experience. Filling out this form does not obligate you to anything—we ask only for whatever time you are able to give when we call you."

Remember to include students on your resource list—you probably have computer hackers among your older students, and there may also children who have traveled to interesting places or who have particular knowledge of local lore.

Also, remember that what is everyday life to one person is an unknown world to another—do *all* the children know what the life of a farmer is like? Bring in a farmer to tell about his daily life. Do all the children know what running a small business is like? Have *any* of the children heard a mother tell what it is like to be a mother? Children can begin to envision a future for themselves when they hear real people telling what it is like to live their kind of life—everything from what time they get up in the morning to how their schedule changes through the seasons to how they decided on that line of work for themselves and what its pains and satisfactions are.

You may want to separate your list into three parts—parents and citizens, teachers, and students.

What do you do with these lists? Pass them around and wait. You may be surprised at what they generate—pride, networking, new projects and ideas, a handy guide for getting help....

Putting the Home Back in Homework

Homework assignments can all be built around family activities. This accomplishes three purposes at once:

- it ropes daily family life into the child's school experience, reinforcing that the teacher and the school recognize the importance of that part of the child's life;

- it permits homework to complement school work rather than repeat it; and

- it makes homework more active than the traditional worksheets.

Most students like to talk about their families. Teachers can capitalize on this. They can simply ask children to report about things they did with their families the day before, or over the weekend. They can ask the children to make up stories about their families for creative writing. They can ask them to tell stories they have heard in their families. They can lead discussions about family rituals: Does your family eat supper together? Do you say grace? Do you go for walks together? Do you watch certain TV shows together? How do you celebrate birthdays? The Fourth of July? Hanukkah? Easter? Christmas?

Teachers can give students interview assignments for homework: Ask a parent about a time when he or she was naughty (kids love those stories), when he or she was scared; when he or she first learned to do a favorite activity. Ask a parent to tell about his/her favorite teacher. Ask a parent to tell his/her earliest memory.... These questions and many more like them can be asked by a child of any age. They can be incorporated into small group sharing sessions, or children can "write them up" as chapters in a book about "Me and My Family." They can be used as the basis for drawing pictures. The main thing is, to be most effective,

they should not be isolated, once-a-year assignments. Rather, throughout the year, students should be encouraged to "bring their families to school" in myriad ways.

The following suggestions are from the Teacher/ Parent Partnerships Handbook (see References for details).
The activities are meant to be done with the parent, and in fact, often center around the routine activities that the parent will be busy with anyway in the evening.

Count how many people are having dinner. _____ Set that many plates. Set that many cups, napkins, and forks.

Fold the socks in the laundry this week. How many matched sets do you have? Sort them by color.

Tell someone at home about an activity you are going to try for the first time this week.

Tell three people at home about our new class pet. Take a good look at it in class, so you will be able to describe it and answer all of their questions.

Estimate the total cost of a grocery order when shopping with your parent(s). Round prices to the nearest $.10 or $1.00. Example: 1 head of lettuce cost $.69 (70) plus one can of corn costs $.29 (30) = $1.00. Write down the final estimation before the groceries are totaled on the cash register. Attach your total to the receipt from the store, and bring it to class...Repeat activity weekly until your estimations are very close to the final total.

For an older child:
Go shopping with one of your parents. Pick three different items on the shelf and compare available brands to select the best buy. Your notes should

include the price and weight of each brand, your calculations, and your conclusions.

Create a family tree going back four generations. Ask your family members for interesting stories about the people on the tree that you never met.

Fill out a typical personal information sheet such as one might find on an application for a job, driver's license, or passport.

Make a food group chart and fill in your family suppers for one week.

—Myers, p. 35.

Clearly this list is just to get you started. Children can read aloud to their parents while they prepare supper, they can weigh their younger brothers and sisters and their pets, they can calculate the square footage of their houses, draw maps of their backyards, you name it. This approach to homework applies as well to high school students as to younger students. Once a teacher adopts the mindset involved here, any classroom lesson can have a related, home-based homework assignment. Sending these assignments home weekly allows parents to schedule convenient times to work with their children on them. It also teaches the children something about planning ahead.

Finally, this approach to homework offers one more way to involve parents: they can suggest assignments that suit their home activities.

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CHAPTER V
Foxfire

Is it possible to get students to assume responsibility for their own learning?

How can learning be organized so it is interesting and at the same time meets state requirements?

What can students do to enhance their sense of self-worth and promote civic pride in the community?

How can teachers cope with classes that have students with widely different ability and achievement levels?

What can teachers do about students who continually cut up in class?

How can teachers motivate students, especially those who don't care, or think school is a waste of time?

What can turn a class around, transform it from a restless, misbehaving group of bored, indifferent, and frustrated teenagers into a hard working, questioning, discussing, reporting, sharing, discovering, self-disciplined and cooperating group of young people?

A young teacher named Eliot Wigginton, faced with the demands of classroom teaching, began asking himself these questions. The answers he arrived at, with the help of students, colleagues, and members of his community, have come to be known as the Foxfire approach.

"Over the past two years I've watched them attack problems, verbalize solutions to those problems and put them into action and, in the process, exceed even my expectations. As I have given up some of the control within the classroom, I have learned that my students, given the opportunity, can do more than even I had believed possible."

—Stumbo, 1989.

The Foxfire approach is made up of many things: a truckload of practical wisdom about how to make a classroom work well; a philosophy about learning, the relationship between schools and communities, and the dignity and value of individuals; pride in the teaching profession and hope for what it can accomplish; and a stubborn willingness to take risks, to look continually for better solutions, and to trust in kids.

The Foxfire approach is more than a set of pedagogical gimmicks. It is a way of transforming schooling from a painful and unproductive experience for students and teachers into an opportunity for personal and community growth.

The Foxfire Story

Twenty-four years ago, fresh from college, Eliot Wigginton started teaching in a small, educationally conservative high school in Rabun Gap, Georgia.

Before the first month was over, he had learned that teaching was going to be tougher than he had thought. Many of his ninth and tenth grade English students could read only at primary school level. Most had difficulty writing a grammatically correct sentence. Worst of all, many were indifferent. They didn't care about what they had been taught and didn't look forward to more of the same. Discipline was a problem. Wigginton on many occasions had to throw a student out of class.

In an effort to make learning English more pleasant, Wigginton tried having his students publish a magazine. At first they worked on poetry

and creative writing, later turning to the community around Rabun Gap for information for articles. Students sought out, interviewed, and then wrote up conversations with local residents who recounted stories passed from generation to generation. Community members also demonstrated and explained trades and skills they knew kiln building, raising and selling mules, quilting, wood carving, moonshining, making rifles, making musical instruments, caning a chair, slaughtering and butchering hogs, and a host of other ways of doing things traditionally. Many of these skills were on the edge of being forgotten and lost.

The experiment clicked ... in more ways than one! Many students started doing research and writing assign-ments with interest and enthusiasm. They began to understand how the know-ledge and wisdom of their own local culture was valuable.

People in the community were pleased and gained a lot of satisfaction from the fact they had been the sources of information that was published. They also were pleased to see young people and others pay attention to tradition and to them. Strong personal relationships developed between students and community members. Wigginton, his students, and members of the community became partners in a learning experience.

The 600 copies of the first issue of the magazine were gone in the first week. A second printing likewise vanished. A second magazine followed. Then things snowballed.

Public reaction to the magazine was extraordinary. The subject matter fascinat-ed readers of the late 1960s. Wigginton and his students started researching, writing, editing, publishing, and marketing the magazine on a regular basis. Articles were compiled into first one, then another, and to date nine Foxfire books and four other titles. The books went through several printings and sold literally hundreds of thousands of copies.

Revenues climbed into the millions of dollars, which were put into an endowment.

The endowment funds have helped set up several other media operations. Foxfire now runs its own press. Students designed and now run a television program at the high school that produces features on Appalachian folklore, material culture, politics, and community issues. A music department teaches music, how to build musical instruments, how to research and document local and regional music. The department produces both records and cassette tapes of contemporary songwriters and traditional music. The Foxfire String Band plays for local fund raisers and books engagements that have included appearances on national television. Tools and products collected from people students have interviewed have been organized and are now displayed in a museum built and run by students. The Foxfire Fund campus now has twenty-two structures including cabins, mills and out-buildings reconstructed by students.

Staff members have developed and continue to support 13 networks of teachers across the country who are interested in and use Foxfire strategies. The fund publishes *Hands On*, a newsletter linking such teachers. Staff members now teach 16 courses at Rabun County High School including college English, Appalachian literature, Foxfire 1 (the basic grammar and composition course), and the magazine class that still produces Foxfire.

FOXFIRE KID'S KORNER

Unedited Writing for Foxfired Kids

Children from a third grade Monongalia County classroom where Foxfire is alive and well were asked this question: "What is the difference between the Foxfire way of learning and the traditional (books/lecture) way of learning?"

Here are their responses about the Foxfire way:

- It's fun.
- Kids want to do it.
- We like to find out what it is about and try new things.
- Kids get to have responsibility.
- Kids get to be with friends.
- Kids get to do more. It's not all listening to the teacher talk and reading out of books.
- Kids get to do what they want to do.
- We learn our way and get to our goal by learning our way.
- We don't just sit in desks, we exercise.
- It's more active, we get to draw and color.
- Foxfire is like playing outside in the summer.

Their responses to learning the "traditional" way:

- It's boring.
- Kids don't want to do it.
- We don't want to do the work this way, it's stupid work.
- You have to just sit and listen to the teacher talk and go blah, blah...
- During lectures you have to sit and you can't get a drink because you may miss something the teacher thinks is important.
- You get in trouble this way because you may fall asleep.
- You have to raise your hand to talk and you never get picked on.
- You look at the book and you don't want to do it. The book makes me feel uptight.

(Reprinted with permission from CRACKLIN'S, *Newsletter of the West Virginia Foxfire Teacher Outreach Network.)*

CRACKLIN'S, *the newsletter of the WV Foxfire Teacher Outreach Network's, reports that a national survey shows the typical Foxfire teacher is elementary (53% elementary, 27% high school and 20% middle school).*

People react to the Foxfire story in different ways. Many parents and teachers say, "So what? This unusual person, working under unusual circumstances, pulls off a success story that can't possibly be repeated anywhere else." A closer look reveals that this reaction is off the mark.

First, Eliot Wigginton was a fairly ordinary teacher when he started. He tried things that didn't work. He didn't know how to react when students threatened him with violence. At first he didn't know how to break into their indifference. He was frustrated that his efforts did not work. He did not succeed at first, but he eventually did.

Then he shared what he was doing with other ordinary teachers—in Kentucky, Maine, Idaho, Texas, and just about every other state in the U.S. Most of these were ordinary teachers, teachers who didn't want to do much more than improve what went on in their classrooms. Not all who tried to change were successful, but many teachers were.

Second, the Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School, where Wigginton teaches, used a conventional curriculum. The principal expected teachers to meet state instructional requirements. Classes were organized in the familiar way—rows of student desks facing the front of the room. Teaching and administrative staff were both educationally and politically conservative.

Third, while most teachers who try Foxfire practices are not likely to find themselves the editor of a national magazine and at the helm of a small empire of enterprises, teachers in ordinary schools have started magazines that have been locally and regionally successful. More importantly, magazines, books, presses, and studies do not reflect the true accomplishments Wigginton and other Foxfire teachers have achieved. Their success is measured by looks in

students' eyes, students' enthusiasm as they undertake and complete an assignment, students' confidence and sense of accomplishment, students' taking responsibility for their learning, and teachers' immense satisfaction that what they are doing makes a difference. Perhaps the most important consequence is that the students develop a sense of and plans for the future.

"I listened to them today as they reported on what they have discovered in their conversations with people in the community and I watched their faces, and most of the anger, the sullen dislike of school, is not there. All the problems are still out there and the environment can still crush them, but for this one hour we are sharing an attempt to get a handle on the world that we live in. I don't have the answers and that helps because it gives them a sense that we are working on this together. Kids that were silent and unresponsive in class have opened up because suddenly value is being placed on the fact that they have a dad who makes props for the mine or a mother who remembers how to make stack cake. . . Sometimes I realize how far I am in this class away from what I was doing last year and it scares me a little—not being sure of exactly where I am headed or how things will go the next day in class. . .[but] even if the higher problem solving skills or thinking skills were not involved, it would be enough for me to see the change that I see in their faces—eyes that look at me openly, that seem to feel at ease, that smile at me for one hour instead of having to find a place in the classroom to hide or to endure one more wasted hour."

—Stumbo in Wigginton, 1989.

HANCOCK COUNTY: Of Boys and Birdhouses

By Elaine McClung, "The Lonestar Teacher", (Allison Elementary School, Grade 4)

I've only done one pure Foxfire project in my classroom, but you would be surprised at how the Foxfire way of thinking permeates the classroom. The children become empowered when they realize that you value new ideas enough to use them.

It has gone a long way in helping with classroom discipline. I use the same principles when I discipline the children. I tell them that they are the only ones who can make choices for themselves. It is surprising to me that they never realize they have sole control over their behavior. I guess allowing them to make choices about how they learn gives them that realization.

One case in point: A little boy moved into our area when we were in the middle of our project (making birdhouses to cover our objectives for measurement). His only way of getting attention was through negative behavior.

We had a guest in the classroom; a reporter, which made it worse. We were discussing where to purchase the wood for our birdhouses. My little problem said, "Why don't you cut down our trees and get wood yourselves?" Well, true to Foxfire, I said, "We'll have to discuss it and vote on it." Talk about prayer and sweaty hands!!! The children discussed the issue very realistically. They listed the positive and negative aspects involved. Then we took a vote. They came through like troopers and I (along with the reporter), breathed a sigh of relief.

A few weeks later I began to see some improvement in my student's behavior. He wanted to learn. Some of the children in my first reading group were trying to get on level. I told them that we only had four and a half months of school. They asked if they could do two

stories a week. I told them that it would have to be voted on, because they would have to read their stories at home and do their vocabulary as well. They voted unanimously to do two stories a week.

Back to my "problem"—One day, he and another child in his reading group were talking. He asked if he could do two stories a week. I told him I did not want them to do their reading at home as I wanted to work carefully on building reading skills. He said, "Can't we do it in class?" I replied that I had no additional time. He asked if he could come in early before school.

To make a long story short, that child has come in early every day at 8:30 to work on his reading. His averages have come up from 42% in science to an 82%. Every grade is up. His behavior has done a 180 degree turn. He still has his days, but they are few and far between. I am so proud of the children, and they are proud of themselves. Thank you Foxfire for giving me back true teaching! The challenges are great but the rewards are fantastic!

(Reprinted with permission from *CRACKLIN'S*, Newsletter of the West Virginia Foxfire Teacher Outreach Network.)

The Foxfire Approach to Education

Anything that works consistently well for over 20 years has to have some underlying principles. Wigginton and his colleagues distilled the following ten "common practices" from their many years of classroom experience.

1. All work students and teachers undertake must flow from student desire. Students must choose, design, revise, execute, reflect on, and then evaluate what they do.

"One indelible moment of many: when Amy Rodgers, a second-grade teacher from Harlan, Kentucky, visited [at a Foxfire teacher workshop] with four of her students, the four talked movingly about how they all voted down Amy's original suggestion and instead decided to make a half-hour video about environmental pollution in their county. The finished tape included four short plays the students had written and performed, a song, and interviews with community residents, including the manager of the county landfill who was the father of one of the students. [The video] has since won a state environmental award and a national Take Pride in America citation. . . . "

—Wigginton, 1989.

2. School work is clearly connected to the surrounding community and the real world outside the classroom. Community members become frequent contributors in the classroom.

"I have watched wonderful relationships develop between the students and the people in the community and witnessed my students deal with people who have become so emotional during an interview that they have cried. As I have watched them, I have realized that they are becoming sensitive to the reality and the needs of others, and in doing so they forget, for a while, about some of the problems that confront them in their own lives. And through it all, I know that they are involved in the very best kind of learning."

—Stumbo, 1989.

3. Students actively process information as opposed to passively receiving it from the teacher and textbook.

"On Wednesday, the group that has volunteered to conduct the in-class interview often shows up with uncharacteristic promptness. The members quickly set up the equipment, test the recorder, load the camera, and retrieve their list of questions from their folders. [The interview] ... is always a powerful experience, and it accomplishes a number of goals simultaneously:

• It puts what the students have learned about the use of camera and tape recorders to use in a real situation, and reinforces and adds to that knowledge.

• It adds important new material to our archive [of interviews of local residents]. . .and gives the students a vital feeling of accomplishment.

• It brings a real-life dimension to the artifacts and the museum buildings studied so far that puts them in a new perspective.

• It illustrates the forty-five-minute pre-interview format they can then initiate with any of their relatives or older neighbors on their own.

• It shows them a different side of an adult with whom they have been familiar but about whom they have usually known little; instantly the relationship changes. "

— Wigginton, 1985.

4. Peer teaching, small-group work, and teamwork are the norm in the classroom. Every student is included. Every student knows that his or her mark will be on the final product. Consequently, students hold themselves and others responsible for their respective contributions. When students hold themselves accountable in this way, discipline is not a problem.

". . . I divide the class into five convenient groups, get a volunteer from each, give each volunteer a recorder and a tape, and instruct each group to make sure every member knows how the machine works. This always turns into the beginnings of what will emerge as some solid peer teaching activities. With groups preoccupied, I can visit each and double-check, often having each student in the group show me which buttons to press to record."

—Wigginton, 1985.

5. The teacher is not the font of all knowledge and wisdom. Nor is the teacher the boss and task master. Instead, the teacher is a resource, a helper, a team leader, and a guide.

". . . our roles had been reversed and suddenly I was the pupil, he the teacher. I was amazed at the depth and quality of his knowledge about the woods. He knew far more on that score than I, and I could not help but respect him. He had his areas of knowledge and ignorance, and I had mine, and in that respect we were equal, each potentially able to share something with the other, to the enrichment of both.

And there was absolutely no arrogance about his manner. Just an easy self-confidence and assurance and a resulting gentleness. He was a far better teacher with me than I had been with him."

—Wigginton, 1985.

6. There must be an audience beyond the teacher for student work, and it must be an audience the students want to please. In turn, the outside audience has to approve what the students do so the students know that what they do is important, needed, and, therefore, worth doing.

> "The response was immediate. The first printing disappeared in a week, and, flushed with success, we ordered a second—also for six hundred copies. Someone told me in town yesterday that at the shirt factory in Clayton, almost every machine has a copy beside it. When the machines are running well, the operators just sit there reading Foxfire."
>
> *—Wigginton, 1985.*

7. There can be no question about the academic integrity of the work students undertake. That means that what they do has to meet clear academic objectives as well as state requirements concerning knowledge and skills that have to be taught. Teachers, however, must question slavishly using mandated objectives as the syllabus and pattern for what goes on in the classroom. For example, teachers need to teach grammar skills as part of teaching writing methodology and not as separate material.

> At a teacher training course run by Wigginton, two of his students
>
> ". . . spread out on the floor all the materials they had collected for their crosstie article: tapes, transcripts, drafts, notes, photographs, proof sheets, diagrams, and page layout. They told the teachers the story behind their article, read their introduction out loud, passed around the various drafts of their introduction, pointed to the chart of ninth-grade language arts objectives on the wall and explained which of those the activity had met and how, ..."
>
> *—Wigginton, 1989.*

8. All work must be honestly evaluated, by the teacher and by the students. Students must consciously answer the teacher's legitimate question, "How can you prove to me that you have mastered the objectives of this work?" Students must learn how to monitor their own progress and come to understand that each student's progress is the concern of every student in the class.

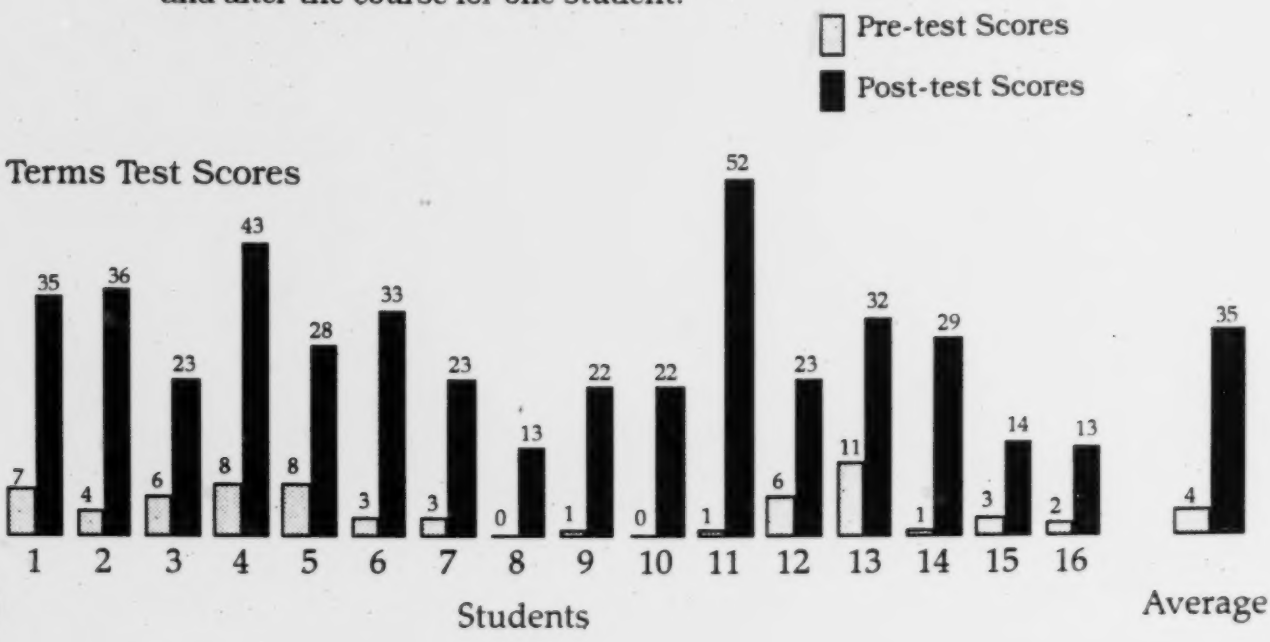
On the first day of class Wigginton gives his students three tests.

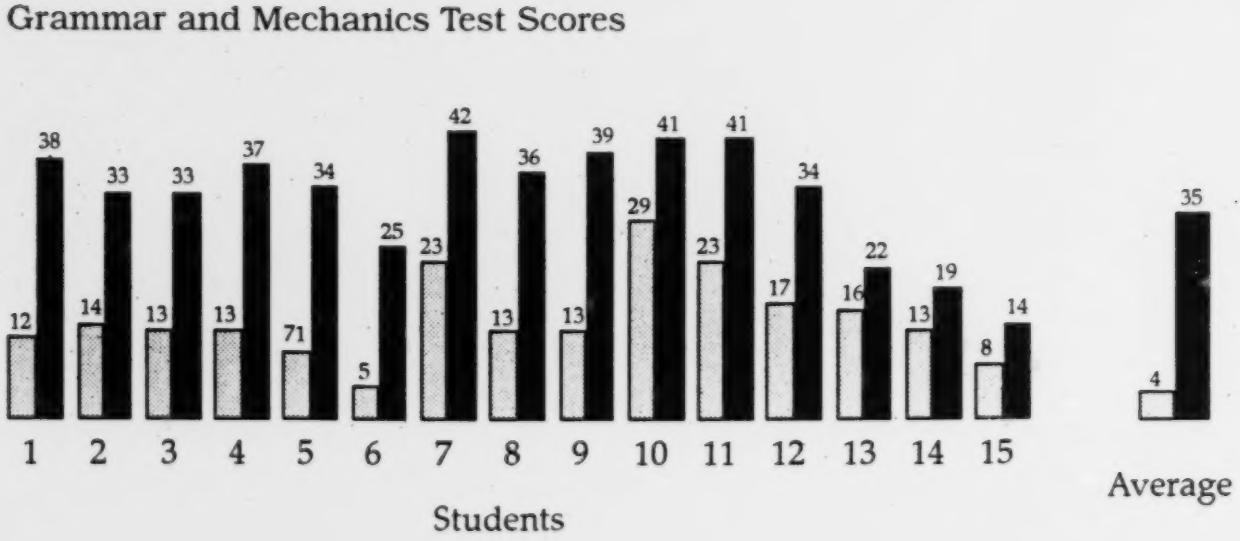
"The first is a list of words any of their grandparents would recognize, which I ask them to define. The second is a piece of writing filled with the kinds of errors our English department is trying to eliminate from student compositions. . . Last, I ask them to write a composition pretending that I am a stranger to the mountains and know nothing about the Appalachian region, its geographical location, its history, its people and their origins, their culture, and their traditions.

[At the end of the term]. . .I get out their pretests. Keeping them at my desk, I hand each student a fresh, blank copy of the words pretest, and ask them to take it again. As they finish and raise their hands, I return their original pretests to them along with a clean copy of the grammar pretests, which they then complete. Passing back their original grammar pretests as they finish, I ask them to compare both sets of tests carefully and see if there is any difference. This is always one of my favorite exercises, for by now the students have completely forgotten the answers they gave on their retests when they took them the first week of the quarter, and the differences in the scores are nearly always dramatic and startling. I like to remember the comment of one of my eighth-graders, who exclaimed, 'God, I really did learn something this quarter!' That sentiment is virtually unanimous."

—Wigginton, 1985

"Charts of the pre- and post-test scores of a typical class show the difference graphically. The chart on top is for the terms test, the one on the bottom, grammar and mechanics. Each pair of columns indicates the test results, before and after the course for one student."





—*from Wigginton, 1985. p. 295.*

9. New activities should flow "gracefully" out of what's been completed. The learning process never ends. When one product is put to bed, students and teachers challenge one another to find new ways to apply the knowledge and skills they acquired.

> "Then we reviewed the number of ways specific mining and refining steps he had explained in the interview could lead students into activities involving math (the number of ounces of gold he retrieves per ton of gravel, the methods he uses for figuring pH, the number of pounds of cyanide he uses per ton of water, the annual budget for his mining operation), science (the specific chemicals used in precipitating gold out of the solution, the use of electrolytic plates and activated charcoals, the presence of alloys and their composition), and mechanics (the operation of the modern crushers, the importance of the location of the fulcrum in the early water-powered crushers). And we looked at the implications of the interview for history (the early gold rush, the role of Andrew Jackson and the federal and state governments in removing the Cherokee Indians, the distribution of land to White settlers, the creation of the Dahlonega mint and its eventual demise, the fact that the house built by the man who first discovered gold in the area is still standing today, abandoned), and economics (the fact that tourism now, rather than gold, is the mainstay of the county's economy, the conflicts created when tourism and the resulting demand for zoning collide head on with mountain values characterized by statements like, 'Nobody is ever going to tell me what I can and cannot do with my own land.')"
>
> *—Wigginton, 1989, p.41 .*

10. Teachers must acknowledge the worth of authentic experience, model that attitude in their instruction with students, and restrict the momentum of policies and practices that deprive students of their chance to use their imaginations.

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Wigginton, Eliot. Feb. 1989. "Foxfire Grows Up." *Harvard Educational Review*, Vol. 59, No. 1.

_____ 1985. *Sometimes A Shining Moment.* Anchor/ Doubleday, Garden City, New York.

Resources

The Foxfire Fund, Inc. provides the following resources for those interested in learning more. For materials or information, call or write to:

The Foxfire Fund, Inc.
P.O. Box B
Rabun Gap, Georgia 30568

Foxfire Teacher Networks

Foxfire Teacher Networks offer training and support for teachers interested in practicing the Foxfire approach to instruction. As of Summer, 1991, Foxfire Teacher Outreach included teacher networks in Georgia, West Virginia, Tennessee, Maine, New York, Idaho, Kentucky, North Carolina, Florida, Nevada, and Washington, with more in the pipeline. For a list of the networks and their coordinators call or write to:

Foxfire Teacher Outreach
P.O. Box B
Rabun Gap, Georgia 30568
(404) 746-5318

Foxfire Course Guides

Foxfire staff are preparing course guides describing day-to-day class activities, an analysis of special projects, including reasons why they failed or succeeded, samples of student work, a discussion of the philosophical underpinnings of the course, and more. They will be available in 1992.

Available guides cover magazine, video and television, and music production; and Appalachian literature, photography, folklore, and the like.

Foxfire
The student-produced magazine that was the catalyst for much of what followed now appears quarterly, capturing and delivering Appalachia's wisdom, beauty, and people.

Hands On
This is a journal for public school teachers whose students are involved in experiential, community-based projects like cultural journalism magazines, community festivals, and the like. It contains inquiries, responses, letters, book reviews, and lengthy articles.

The following are available through Foxfire:

Foxfire: 25 Years, edited by Eliot Wigginton and his students, Doubleday, 1991,: 359 pp.

For two years current Foxfire students interviewed former students and others instrumental in Foxfire's growth. The resulting book is a lively conversation woven from strings of shining moments that former students still recall—and call upon—even 20 years later. Such moments were created in a setting that allowed these kids to do something: to help direct their own education by making decisions, solving problems, traveling, giving presentations, talking to adults one-to-one, and producing writing that millions would eventually read.

Shining Moments: The Foxfire Approach to Teaching
Produced for Foxfire by Georgia Public Television. *Shining Moments* shows the Foxfire approach to teaching at work in the classrooms of five very different teachers with varying populations of children, from first grade through high school. Each teacher (in addition to the Rabun County Foxfire staff) talks about the fears and

frustrations—but mostly the shining moments--of engaging the Foxfire approach in the classroom. Two principals and the Georgia State Superintendent of Education add their views on the approach.

Also from your local library:
Wigginton, Eliot. *Sometimes a Shining Moment.* Garden City, New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday,

This book is Wigginton's personal account of the Foxfire experience. The first half of the book is a Foxfire II, the class that produces the Foxfire magazine.

Wigginton, Eliot. "Foxfire Grows Up," *Harvard Educational Review,* Vol. 59, No. 1, February 1989, pp. 24–49.

In this article, Wigginton discusses Foxfire's philosophy and common practices, difficulties teachers encounter, and progress in the development of several networks designed to support teachers in the field. The article includes a fascinating description of Foxfire's teacher training courses. Two exercises in the training program demonstrate unexpected agreement between teachers and students about what constitutes a good learning experience and what makes a good teacher.

Teachers taking the course select outstanding learning experiences they have had and prepare a list of factors that made those experiences exceptional. When teachers compare their list with a similar lists prepared by high-school students Wigginton has taught, they find that the two lists are virtually identical.

In a similar exercise, the teachers list the qualities of a good teacher. Again they compare their list of qualities with one prepared by high-school students. Again, teachers discover the similarity between student opinions and their own.

A helpful way to extend your sense of the possible is to look at what others have done. Throughout this this book we have tried to sprinkle small-scale, real-life examples of how schools and communities have gone about solving their problems and achieving their goals. In this section, we discuss larger changes that may help you redefine the role of your school and how it does its business. The ideas described here can be designed differently to suit different situations. They can be used as jumping off places, to open your mind to bigger ideas than mere "tinkering," or as endpoints in and of themselves.

These ideas all require a good working relationship between school personnel and community members. Of highest importance is teachers who are willing to try something new. One imaginative teacher, adequately supported, can demonstrate new ideas in such a way as to win others' interest and trust. On the other hand, even a large group of citizens and school administrators will have a difficult time ramming changes down the throats of resisting teachers. We mention this because we are convinced that improving your school's performance requires a partnership between community members and professional personnel (particularly teachers), not a confrontation or power struggle. Teachers are most likely to be open to trying something new when they feel appreciated. In addition, they will need training. One of the most potent things you can do for your school and community is to arrange high-quality training of interest to your teachers.

Many resources are available to encourage parent involvement in schools. Rather than duplicate all of that information here, we suggest a different kind of involvement—wide-ranging discussion of the role and goals of your school. When a particular idea in this book suits your situation, we hope that the references included will help you move forward with the idea.

CHAPTER VI
Schools, Business and Development

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"Since the future economic health of rural localities is no longer totally dependent on whether they are endowed with natural resources, a recreational attraction or even an industrial park, future rural development will be much more dependent on human resources, human ingenuity and the actions localities choose to take. In short, effective rural development will require innovation."

—Nactigal and Hobbs, p. 20.

As many communities have proven, locally focused, school-based curriculum programs can help a community undertake serious economic revitalization efforts. Similarly, development efforts started outside the school can draw on student energy and talent. Integrating community development and economic revitalization with real-life learning experiences can give rural towns a chance at gaining new life, while students find meaningful uses for their skills

Using examples from across the country, this chapter describes how innovative teachers, administrators, students and community members have linked learning and business opportunities. These people often begin with a single goal in mind—either a real-life learning project or an economic revitalization effort—but find later that many goals are addressed at once. Take, for example, the town of Hunters, Washington.

The Columbia School District is one of the poorest in the state of Washington. Eighty percent of the students are on the free-lunch program. The local economy has been severely depressed.

A few years ago, the state game department contacted the local school to see if they would be interested in receiving baby pheasants as part of a raise-and-release program. The local Future Farmers of America (FFA) chapter took on the project with the intention of attracting hunters from the Spokane area. The FFA later began commercial rainbow trout aquaculture, raising and releasing over 90,000 trout into streams in the area.

How did all of this new wildlife help the community out of its sad situation? By helping to boost the hunting and fishing business and giving the students and community back their pride.

• The FFA won the state award for "Building our Community."

• Tourism greatly increased, sparking entrepreneurs to start a new mobile home/RV park and two new gas stations to help serve the hunters and anglers.

• School athletic teams, formerly easy to beat, have won three state championships in three years.

• While few high-school graduates had previously gone on with their educations, the class of 1989 had 20 of 23 going to college, three of those on full academic scholarships. Three graduates will be pursuing wildlife management careers as a result of being involved with the FFA projects.

—Combs, Spears, Bailey, 1991..

It all started with a few birds.

Small Communities, Small Developments

There are many approaches to economic revitalization and community development. For years many localities engaged in "smokestack chasing"—looking for large industrial employers to move to their areas, bringing hopes of jobs and prosperity. More recently with the trend for industry to move such operations overseas, the attempts have been to attract newer, high-tech manufacturers. Though many towns have had very successful relationships with large employers, the result is often a community dependent on a few sources for many jobs.

Across the country, corporations joining the cry for quality education. Many companies are starting innovative granting programs and entering partnerships with schools. While you may be lucky enough to live in a community that has benefitted from corporate programs, most small towns have not. Rather than wait for outside help, look to your own resources and strengths to revitalize your community.

There are alternatives to large-scale industrial devel-opment, alternatives that play to the strengths of rural communities without drastically changing them. The Mid-continent Regional Education Laboratory (McREL) has outlined a six-step model for integrating a wide range of reforms into a cohesive program. Drawing on the strength of school-community ties and shared needs, McREL's approach encourages reality-based education while also helping small rural towns mobilize to achieve community development, what they call "a process to emphasize the common interests of people and evolve new possibilities for production, distribution and consumption of goods and services." The six steps, which involve students, teachers, businesses, and the community at large, include:

1. Redefining the mission of the school. This involves rethinking what schools prepare students for, and teaching students how to create jobs rather than just how to find them. It also involves expanding the school's mission beyond dealing exclusively with youth, to becoming a resource the community can use to meet its own development needs. In some cases this means the schools are the location for adult training.

2. Using teacher and student skills to help plan community development. Teachers and students can collect and analyze information on the community's economic base, consumer needs, energy use, employment, and other aspects of the community that the community needs to plan its future.

3. Building entrepreneurial skills into the curriculum. Employment has changed in this country. To survive in the 21st century young people have to know how to identify economic opportunities, prepare business plans, and create their own employment.

4. Students and adults developing plans for new small businesses in the community. Business plans are reviewed by a local development advisory council.

5. The school helping to develop and incubate small businesses. Sometimes this means making space or equipment available. Local development advisory councils oversee the process to ensure that start-up businesses do not compete, and to mobilize community support.

6. Newly established businesses spinning off from their school support. Once set up, school-based enterprises fulfill their educational objective to improve and expand learning opportunities for students attending rural schools. Once they are able to stand on their own, they need to move ahead to make room for other efforts.

(Details about where to get McREL publications can be found in Resources at the end of this chapter.)

School-Based Enterprises

Students as Job Creators

"... The success of the rural school has ... been evaluated mostly in terms of how well it prepares its students to continue their education and pursue their careers in larger labor markets.... Rural communities invest their local dollars and their most precious resource, their children, and end up exporting both.... Rural communities, through their investment in education, have contributed substantially to subsidizing economic growth elsewhere. An alternative is discovering how those local educational investments might contribute more directly to local development."

—Nachtigal and Hobbs, 1988.

School-based enterprise, where students develop and actually run their own business, is an educational investment with several paybacks. It involves hands-on learning, relevancy, and problem solving, and teaches a variety of planning and analytical skills; helps rural communities stimulate new business development and keep their human resources at home; and serves education and community purposes simultaneously.

School-based enterprise is not a cure-all, it is a beginning—linking schools with their communities, sharing school resources with the community, and giving students skills, knowledge, self-confidence, and a possible future in their home community.

School-based enterprises differ from other small business starts in that they are subsidized to some degree by the school system, which could give these enterprises an edge over other businesses. For this reason, school-based businesses should avoid any directly competitive situations.

Local competition was no problem when Buffalo, South Dakota began its school-based development project. Local residents say Buffalo is "the next step before the end of the world." If it's not quite that far, it's pretty close. The county seat for Harding County, Buffalo is separated from Belle Fourche, the nearest town of any size, by seventy miles of sagebrush, buttes, mud, and missile silos. The county's 1,300 residents are

Students in one school were unhappy with the merchandise available at a general store across the street from their school, and wished to start a school store to meet their needs. Their instructor insisted that they talk to the proprietor of the general store about their plans. The upshot was that she began carrying what they wanted, relations improved between the school and the store, and the students found themselves a different business niche.

—Reported by Sylvia Parker, McREL

scattered over 2,500 square miles. Consolidation reduced the county's 60 school houses to eight elementary schools and one combined middle school-high school.

Say a class starts a business that it runs for a couple of years, but then begins to lose money, and closes. Did the program fail? Did the students fail?

No! The business failed, but the students did not. They learned something, probably a lot. Learning is the point of other classes, so it is an adequate outcome for this one, too. This does not mean that enterprises should be started with anything less than a "real world" attitude and plan, only that their success is judged by multiple factors.

In the fall of 1988, Curt Shaw—the history, government and social science teacher at Harding County High School—agreed to run an economic development program at the school. The purpose of the course was to teach students about their community and how to plan and run a business. To do that the students had to get out of the classroom. Their first venture was a community survey.

If you look carefully down Main Street in Buffalo, you would count four or five businesses. Before the survey, most people thought there wasn't much business activity outside of ranching. The survey changed that. It identified no fewer than 80 businesses in the county, many of them cottage industries like upholstery shops and insurance agencies operating out of homes. The students turned the results of their survey into a business directory that they distributed throughout the county.

By the end of January 1989, Shaw and his class decided on a money-making venture. They would make coin banks in the shape of South Dakota, bearing the legend "You Can Bank on South Dakota." The students kicked off their marketing campaign at a press conference with the governor and sent informatiom to 133 banks and their branches all over the state. They got dozens of orders for their banks at $15 each plus postage and handling.

Deitrich, Idaho—When the teacher in charge of raising money for the senior trip sensed that the community was growing tired of door-to-door candy sales, he hit on some new ideas that teach as well as pay. The seniors now grow and sell plants from the school's greenhouse and raise "meal" worms for fishbait companies. The students learn business and biology and the community is freed from the cash and calorie burden of the traditional candy sale.

The student survey also turned up another business idea. It revealed a widespread need for people to do odd jobs, like painting, and cleaning and putting on storm windows. Shaw's class put together an employment agency. They circulated applications to all students, negotiated with the school secretary to take messages, developed a database to match student talents with requests, and publicized the program through the local paper, radio station and with posters placed in churches and other community gathering places. The project charges student workers

five percent of their first day's wage, and a smaller percentage for repeat business. So far, everyone has profited. The students have learned organizational skills, the workers have earned money, and the older people now see the students as a source of help rather than an annoyance. Community pride has blossomed as the appearance of homes has improved.

Ten Strategies For Making The Connection Education and Rural Development

1. Chamber-School Committee Membership. Appoint educators to Chamber of Commerce committees; appoint business people to schools committees. Ask participants to report regularly to their respective boards on what they are doing.

2. Joint School Board-Chamber Meetings. Schedule regularly a joint meeting of the School Board and the Chamber of Commerce to share information relevant to economic development.

3. Economic Surveys by School Classes. Ask high-school classes or clubs to conduct community surveys to help determine current economic activities, trends, and projections.

4. Career Awareness Days. Ask local employers to act as "mentors for a day" for high-school students as a means of career exploration.

5. Teacher-Business Exchanges. Sponsor a one-day "job exchange" program, asking teachers to work in businesses and business people to work in schools. Hold a follow-up discussion.

6. Entrepreneurship Education. Sponsor a high-school class on starting and operating a small business, with guest speakers from local businesses as an integral part of the instructional plan.

7. School Facilities as Incubators. Make underused school facilities available as small business incubators. Hire students to provide support services.

8. School-Based Businesses. Initiate a program that will help students explore, start and operate businesses filling gaps in available local services.

9. Joint Economic Development Planning. Ask the School Board, County Board, Town Council, and Chamber of Commerce to develop a joint area economic development action plan, using the unique strengths and contributions of each partner.

10. Public-Private Partnership for Leadership Development. Focus the program on developing local capacity and nurturing local resources that are critical to economic renewal.

How Communities Benefit from Small Business Incubation

In many ways, new small businesses are like children: they grow and thrive best in a hospitable, nurturing environment. Business incubators are facilities that offer such an environment with shared equipment, reasonable expenses, helpful advice and access to services and markets usually reserved for more established enterprises.

Once a business is on its feet, it moves out from the incubator into the community. The time it takes to move out may vary from several months to several years, depending on the incubator's policy and the growth rate of the business.

In towns and cities across the country, business incubators of all types and sizes are starting up. There are now over 400, from non-profit organizations housed in old warehouses or schools to for-profit ventures in new facilities.

Custer, South Dakota—Students conducted a community survey for the chamber of commerce that served as a basis for low-income housing loan from the Farm Home Administration.

A school building often has the room to house some small businesses, especially those started by students. Many communities have vacant public buildings that could use some attention and a facelift. In small rural communities, the school may be the sole location in town that has access to office equipment and also light industrial equipment such as wood and metal-working shops and food service facilities.

The National Business Incubation Association reports the following:

- 80% of the businesses nurtured in incubators survive.
- 80% of all small businesses fail after five years.
- small business is the fastest growing sector in the American economy.
- 99% of all U.S. businesses have fewer than 100 employees.
- 90% of all U.S. businesses have fewer than 20 employees.
- 98% of all new jobs are in businesses with fewer than 20 employees.

—Small Business Administration and National Business Incubator Associationi

Business incubation may seem to be a sideline issue to the business of education; but if your community is dedicated to providing real-life opportunities for students of all ages, small business startups can offer education and employment under one roof.

Getting Students Involved

Starting up successful small businesses has obvious economic benefits to a community—jobs, commerce, and services. Involving students in small businesses can add educational benefits to the venture. One program that focuses on the learning opportunities of small business is Rural Entrepreneurship through Action Learning (REAL). REAL Enterprises is a national non-profit organization with resources for helping to establish student operated development enterprises nation wide. The program currently encourages and assists participants at rural high schools and community colleges in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia.

Ocracoke Island, North Carolina—Students have set up and operate Silver Lake Boat Rentals.

REAL helps:

• rural schools to become effective small business incubators,

• participants to develop economic literacy as well as competence in entrepreneurship and business management,

• to create new jobs by identifying and developing untapped opportunities in local economies,

• rural students to develop greater self-esteem, complete their schooling, and become productive citizens.

REAL is founded on the belief that changes in the national economy require a cross-section of workers and leaders with strong thinking, problem-posing, and problem-solving skills. These skills are inherently valuable and can be practically applied in a range of situations and equip students to deal with the 21st century. It believes education must enable students to develop economic opportunities and create jobs, not just fit into jobs.

In contrast to programs like Junior Achievement, REAL economic enterprises are not simulations. They are the real thing, businesses that become part of a community's economic and employment base. Students start these businesses with school support. After the businesses are on their feet, students spin them off to be free-standing, regular commercial entities.

REAL uses both a classroom and an experiential component. Students take courses for academic credit in applied economics, entrepreneurship and small business ownership and management. Students also research, develop, and run their own businesses.

REAL projects have a number of educational benefits. Students have access to new and improved courses on applied economics, entrepreneurship, and small business management. They also receive technical training in fields related to the businesses they start. Perhaps most important of all are the research, data interpretation, decision making, and communication skills they obtain while researching, planning, and setting up a real business.

REAL projects have gotten off the ground in close to 20 communities in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. Details on how to get information about REAL are found in Resources at the end of this chapter.

Watching the Flow of Money

The following discussion shows an example of the potential for blending reality-based curriculum content with practical community economics.

Many smaller communities are dependent on outside sources for their basic needs. In fact, some towns have taken a tally of where their money goes, and have found that 70% of the income is paid out in taxes, energy and insurance. Of these factors, one of the most changeable is the cost of energy. Rocky Mountain Institute has developed an Economic Renewal Project that is based in part on reducing energy costs throughout the community. Money that stays in a community recirculates within that smaller scale economy rather than leaking out.

"Verdigre, Nebraska, is a farming community with a population of 650 and an annual income of around $5 million. A study of Verdigre's economy revealed that taxes were the largest single expenditure, costing a total of 15% of the town's income. Tax monies partially return to the community to pay for schools, roads, municipal services, unemployment insurance, and such. However, nearly an equivalent amount is spent outside the community for energy and does not return. In fact, about 70% of the town's $5 million income leaves the town to pay for energy, processed food, and insurance."

—RMI Energy Casebook, p.3.

When you consider that as much as 80 to 90 cents of every dollar spent on energy in your community is probably leaving town, energy conservation starts to look financially promising. When looking for a project that could benefit the entire community, socially, educationally, economically and environmentally, a community energy conservation program is a fine place to start. Energy flows everywhere in the community, touching everyone's life, helping us work and move, stay warm or keep cool. Conserving energy helps the entire community save money that can then stay in town to nurture other projects.

The energy conservation business is an untapped business opportunity in most towns in the United States. Relatively simple in its technology and training requirements, a home energy consulting firm that helps local residents save on their heating and electric bills could be a student run business. Insulation, caulk, and simple plumbing fixtures are the primary tools of the trade—saving hot water saves significant amounts of energy. One possible startup could be to provide the service at cost to the elderly or those already on fuel assistance. Federal and state money may be available for just such a project. And once the community sees the financial savings of such demonstrations, the market for commercial applications can open up.

Educational Benefits

The students involved in an energy-related business or study are looking at more than business plans and economics. They have an opportunity to study the physics behind energy efficiency, alternative home design and architecture, and the use of local fuel substitutes. An "energy unit" can cut across the curriculum, looking at historic uses, environmental effects, public and private decision making, government regulation, international relations, and the economics of individual homes. And, while students are working on developing their investigative and entrepreneurial skills, they are helping your town or county find its hidden dollars.

If students are finding how people in town spend their money, that information may be of use well beyond the scope of the class investigation. If they find out that the single largest expense for every business and citizen in town is energy, then they have identified an area where the community can save money. If they follow up with an investigation that reveals that people are spending most of these energy dollars on transportation to the city to buy goods that they just can't find in town, then they may have found a market demand that could be profitably filled from within the community. If they find that elderly and other fixed-income people are spending a high proportion of their income on heating costs, they have identified a social service need—home energy audits and another possible startup business, insulation and energy retrofitting. The elderly stay warm, the young folks learn, and everyone can end up with more money that doesn't have to leave the community to pay for ener

Rocky Mountain Institute's Economic Renewal Program encourages communities to analyze their current economic situation and to apply four guiding principles to rejuvenate their economies:

1. Plug the Leaks.
Looking hard at where your money flows "focuses on slowing or preventing the unnecessary leakage of dollars from your community. Your community may be spending a lot of money elsewhere for goods or services that are, or could be, produced at home. There may be money leaking from your community because of the inefficient use of some resources. By investigating ways to use your community's own resources more effectively, you can save money and create business opportunities."

2. Support Existing Business. This "helps to strengthen the local economy by supporting, encouraging, and investing in existing businesses. The largest share of all commercial and industrial growth is generated by existing enterprise. Helping local businesses stay in the community, and perhaps even expand, can generate a high rate of return. In addition, the community's culture is largely defined by the businesses already in place. The local economy is based upon an existing labor forces, resources supply, infra-structure, expertise, and other ingredients. Supporting this existing economic base preserves and creates jobs, creates greater prosperity, and preserves your way of life."

3. Encourage New Enterprises.
New businesses need encouragement to make it through their first few years. This help can come in many forms: "Residents of Great Barrington, Massachusetts are encouraging new local enterprise by helping entrepreneurs gain access to capital. Through a Community Loan Fund account at the local bank, they can collateralize loans the bank might not otherwise grant to local businesses."

4. Recruit Compatible New Businesses.
Businesses that blend well with the values and resources of the community may help preserve or even improve the quality of life for all the residents. "Careful and selective business recruitment can assist your community in finding those firms capable of taking advantage of the needs and opportunities you have identified, opportunities that may have been overlooked by either existing or new local businesses. Recruitment can also help your community expand its export capacity by bringing in a business that sells products and services out of town."

Information on RMI's programs and publications can be found in the resource section at the end of this chapter.

Some Suggested School-Based Economic

Of course energy conservation is just one of hundreds of small businesses that successful communities can use. The following list may help your brainstorming session get off to a good start.

- Manufacturing signs for political campaigns
- Printing shops
- Catering service
- Publish a business directory
- Publish a community "yellow pages" listing talents community members are willing to share, exchange, or learn
- Community education programs—computer skills, car maintenance, music lessons
- Event management—business and trade shows, job fairs, art and music festivals, town celebrations, wedding and other receptions
- Conduct energy audits for homes and commercial buildings
- Retrofit homes and commercial buildings for energy efficiency
- Conduct safety audits for homes and commercial buildings
- Conduct waste audits for households, apartment buildings, and businesses
- Run recycling businesses
- Research consulting—surveys for government, business, churches, organizations, individuals
- Typing services
- Run demonstration farms and agricultural experiments
- Run demonstration gardens, consult on different methods
- Publish community newsletter
- Children's day care
- Set up and run summer youth programs, park programs, summer camps, educational camping and other excursions
- Landscaping and yard maintenance
- Entertainment bureaus/booking services
- Video tape home contents for insurance policy holders
- Transportation company—taxi, bus shuttle, sober pickup for those who've been drinking and don't want to drive
- Ice cream truck for nearby state or federal park
- Golf driving range
- Delivery service—grocery, prescriptions, other
- Portable tack shop to travel to rodeos, horse shows
- Hunting and fishing guide service
- Marketing service
- Mailing service
- Concessions—at local swimming pool, summer-time softball and other sport events
- Fund raising
- Garbage service
- Reconstruction of closed feature building in town—old theater, railroad station—and run as a tourist attraction
- Business consulting service helping local residents put together business plans
- Rental library for books, paperbacks, records, tapes, CDs, and videos
- Organize a twice-a-year community-wide garage sale

Resources Schools Can Bring to the Effort

1. Physical facilities. Schools can host meetings, exhibits, and celebrations. They can provide an environment in which fledgling enterprises can incubate using inexpensive room, light and heat.

2. Materials and equipment. Schools have vehicles, computers, phones, copy machines, a library, tools, industrial shops, kitchens. Only the imagination limits the way these facilities can be harnessed both to help plan school-based enterprises and to participate in those enterprises. One example: the school's fleet of buses and vans could be the backbone of a district's public transportation system.

3. Purchasing power. Schools can help start-up enterprises by buying their products and services. Schools likewise can support existing businesses in the same way—everything from vehicle and equipment maintenance to office and paper supplies to insurance coverage.

Presho, South Dakota—The local rural schools and community development project have undertaken a number of enterprises—running concessions at school functions, delivering flowers for Mother's Day, putting on a Sunday night of fine dining, selling Lyman (County) Raider sweatshirts, and producing The Lyman Connection, *a weekly video aired on television that contains county wide news and student-made commercials.*

4. Financial capacity. Schools can serve as financial and institutional umbrellas for local development advisory councils or enterprises themselves, enabling them to receive federal, state, or private foundation funding.

5. Instruction. Schools can teach the entrepreneurial skills students and their parents need. This can be done in a variety of ways, including separate courses or as approved individual activity. Such instruction need not be limited to youth. Evening or weekend courses can provide adult community members an opportunity to learn entrepreneurial skills as well.

6. Staff. Teachers, principals, administrative and maintenance staff, aides, and others can be leaders, providing technical information, and physical, moral, and political support.

7. Students. Students are one of the most untapped resources in the U.S. Generally society does not take them seriously. It does not believe they have skills, energy, time, ambition, and the generosity to make major contributions to the communities in which they live. Often they only have to be asked and given a little support.

Resources

1. REAL has two versions of a video documentary, *It's Time to Get REAL!*, that can be used for orientation (the 20-minute tape) or a brief overview (the 10-minute version). Both present interviews with participating students, teachers, administrators, community leaders, and REAL staff members shot on-site in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. The video tapes can be purchased from N.C. REAL Enterprises Inc. at the Georgia address below for $19.95.

REAL also publishes a news-letter, The REAL Story, three times a year. It contains thought pieces, news on REAL events, practical advice to groups engaged in the REAL process, participant comments on their experiences, and more. Subscribe through the Georgia address below.

All general inquiries should be address to the Georgia address:

Dr. Paul F. DeLargy
REAL Enterprises, Inc.
P.O. Box 1643
Athens, Georgia 20601
(404) 546-9061

Jonathan P. Sher
N.C. REAL Enterprises Inc.
Route 1, Box 323K
Chapel Hill, NC 27514
(919) 929-3939

Vickie Propst
South Carolina REAL Enterprises
P.O. Box 1149
Columbia, SC 29202
(803) 737-0888

2. Jonathan P. Sher. "School-based Community Development Corporations: A New Strategy for Education and Development in Rural America."

In *Education in Rural America: A Reassessment of Conventional Wisdom*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1977. pp. 291-346.

This long treatment by the person who founded REAL discusses thoroughly the need for school-based community development corporations (CDC's), and their objectives; organization, governance, and financing; and educational and economic operations. This is an excellent resource to create a vision of what CDC's can accomplish and as a reference manual, but look elsewhere for practical information.

3. Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory
   McREL
   12500 E. Iliff Avenue, Suite 201
   Aurora, CO 80014
   (303) 337-0990

"What's Noteworthy on Rural Schools and Community Development." McREL, no date.

Brief, concise, and to the point, this 45-page publication from McREL's Rural Institute, presents practical suggestions grounded in sound theory. It starts with a vision of what rejuvenated rural communities could look like in the 21st century and explains why such communities are in the national interest. Short chapters describe how schools and communities are interdependent; how they need to and can cooperate in rejuvenation efforts; the benefits of taking learning outside the classroom; how to study a community; how to identify and set up school-based enterprises, including the prepartion of business plans; how to redesign classes so that community and economic development instruction becomes a part of existing curricula, not an additional burden; and examples of successful efforts.

Also from McREL, "Rural Schools and Community Development." Aurora, CO: McREL, October 1990.

This 63-page publication is a useful companion to McREL's "What's Newsworthy on Rural Schools and Community Development." It lays out guidelines for undertaking combined rural schools and community development projects. Particularly helpful are the suggestions for fitting such efforts into a school's curriculum—as an individual student project, a class within a defined subject area, a class in a new or

separate area, a cross curricular initiative, a whole-schools approach, or an extracurricular activity.

This booklet also contains easy to follow directions for developing a community business directory.

Much of this publication is given to case studies of McREL's Rural Schools and Community Development projects undertaken in South Dakota towns. These case studies describe and analyze factors working for and against the long-term effects of certain projects. Also included are the personal stories of four teachers and one principal who got involved in the projects. The case studies and the personal stories provide an excellent "reality check" for individuals undertaking similar projects.

5. Heartland Center for Leadership Development
   941 O Street, Suite 818
   Lincoln, NE 68508.

Schools as Entrepreneurs: Helping Small Towns Survive. 1988.
Profiles of seven school-community projects capturing the range of activities possible. Belle Fourche, South Dakota has integrated entrepreneurship into its curriculum, while Deposit, New York is operating its own greenhouse. The mythical town of Allenville captures what many rural communities have experienced (changes in the past as well as challenges of the present) and what might be possible (considerations for the present).

6. Rural Clearinghouse for Lifelong Education and Development
   College Court Building
   Kansas State University
   Manhattan, KS 66506

Accommodating Change and Diversity: Linking Rural Schools To Communities ($12.00)
This publication explores strategies by which rural schools have become involved in community development, extended school resources in support of lifelong learning, and offered a focus for community social services.

Two case studies explore the process by which schools introduce reforms. Separate chapters on each approach offer a wide range of ideas tried by rural schools. Contacts for the dozens of schools mentioned are also included.

7. Economic Renewal Program
   Rocky Mountain Institute
   1739 Snowmass Creek Road
   Snowmass CO 81654
   (303) 927-4178

The Economic Renewal Program has a series of casebooks and workbooks designed to help communities focus "on business opportunities that exist because of resources in your community," rather than on outside inputs. Two of the books—the *Business Opportunities Casebook* and the *Business Opportunities Workbook*—are available free from the U.S. Small Business Administration district offices. Look them up under "U.S. Government" in your phone book or ask directory assistance for the district office. Their staff also runs community workshops, helping people discover their own resources and how to tap them.

8. Western Rural Development Center
   Oregon State University
   Corvallis, OR 97331

The Center publishes a series on small town development strategies:

- Marketing the Uniqueness of Small Towns
- Health Care for Western Rural Communities: A Workbook for Considering Alternatives
- Community Evaluation for Economic Development
- Socioeconomic Indicators for Small Towns
- Helping Small Towns to Grow
- To Grow or Not To Grow: Questions about Economic Development
- Identifying Problems and Establishing Objectives
- Understanding Your Local Economy: Economic Base Analysis and Local Development Strategies
- The Aging Population, Retirement Income and the Local Economy

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CHAPTER VII
The Four-Day School Week

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The traditional school schedule roughly follows a standard work week, and accomodates the agricultural year. (Historically, students were released for the summer to help at home.) Now educators have begun to discuss changes in this schedule that would better accomocate modern life. One change is longer days, to match more closely the eight-hour office day.

Another change is year-round school, once again accomodating adult work schedules. (Even in rural areas, agriculture accounts for a small percentage of adult work.) Because they affect everyone related to a school system, schedule changes bear long and careful consideration. But where they suit the communities life, serve financial demands, and promote (or at least don't hurt) educational purposes, schedule changes are one option. We select the four-day school week because of its successful track record in rural areas.

How can you save money, have longer class periods for special projects and lab classes, and free up time for special events and community work all at the same time?

Consider a four-day school week.

The four-day week has been tried in school districts all across the country. Reports are generally positive, including significant cost savings, high teacher and public satisfaction, and equal or slightly improved student achievement.

Common characteristics of districts that choose the four-day week are:

small size
limited resources
large geographical area
high transportation costs
severe climate
high energy costs

Does this describe your school district? If so, read on.

The main reason that New Mexico school districts choose to implement a four-day school week is to reduce operating costs, primarily through reduced energy consumption. Available data indicates that not only are fuel and electricity costs decreased by 10 to 25 percent when the district switches to a four-day week, but many districts are reporting a reduction of 10 to 20 percent in transportation costs.

—Grau and Shaugnessy

Advantages of the Four-day Week

• Districts report significant savings on fuel, food, and transportation costs.

• Uses school time more efficiently by cutting down on the time lost between classes and in setting up and breaking down lab classes, art projects, and so forth. Despite fewer days in the classroom, districts report equal or increased student contact time.

• Improved student and teacher attendance rates. (Note that improved teacher attendance further increases savings by cutting down substitute expenses.)

• High morale. A survey in Colorado showed 90% of parents, students and staff were enthusiastic about their four-day week. Some districts have even noted a decline in student discipline problems.

• Increased family time. Districts report that families use the time for scheduling appointments that once would have been taken out of school time. Older students are able to find employment. In rural communities, many families appreciate the block of time available for children to help with farm chores.

• Fewer long bus rides for rural children.

• Improved staff development time by using the nonattendance day. Staff members also report using this day for planning, contacting parents, and conducting extracurricular

Problems With the Four-day Week

• Some parents must find child care for the nonattendance day. Note, however, that these same parents probably have to make after-school arrangements during the five-day week, and a pool of high-school students should be available to babysit on the nonattendance day. In fact, this is a perfect opportunity for establishing a school-based enterprise—a day-care center.

• Children are less available for family during the days they are in school.

• A number of professional adjustments are required. Teachers of younger students must work rest and food breaks into the longer day. Coaches and other leaders of extra-curricular activities have to adjust schedules. Teachers need to adjust to longer class periods and a different approach to homework.

activities, as well as tending to their own private commitments.

• Improved access for maintenance of facilities.

• A large block of time becomes available for special projects, sports and extracurricular events, and student involvement in non-school activities such as music lessons or community service projects.

• A change in the nature of homework assignments. Paperwork is completed during the longer class periods, and homework can be saved for in-depth projects.

• Longer class periods enhance activity-oriented classes such as science labs.

"During the four-year pilot period for the Custer County Consolidated School in Colorado, achievement test scores went up every year (Blankenship, 1984). Where it was possible, test scores on standardized tests administered were compared under both kinds of school calendars. Teachers and administrators feel that the improvements in each case are fairly contributed to an increase in time on task."

—Grau and Shaugnessy

• Each student day missed is a greater instructional loss. Some districts have cut down on losses due to snow days or three-day weekends by occasionally scheduling classes on their non-attendance day.

• While this schedule saves a lot of money for the school system, it redistributes some of those costs to individual families—babysitting, food, and transportation on the nonattendance day.

How Does It Work?

The four-day week lengthens the school day by about one hour for four days and eliminates attendance on the fifth day. Yes, it defies common sense. How can those added hours take the place of an entire day?

As the chart below demonstrates, instructional time needs to be broken down into minutes to work out a four-day schedule. By increasing instructional time by about 60 minutes per day (39 for kindergarteners), a four-day week delivers the same or more actual time in school over the same number of weeks as the traditional five-day schedule.

Getting a Full Year Out of the Four Day Week

A Sample Schedule

Five-Day Program
180 instructional days/year

grade level	minutes/yr	minutes/day
kindergarten	36,000	200
grades 1–3	50,400	280
grades 4–8	54,000	300
grades 9–12	64,800	360

Four-Day Program
151 instructional days/year

grade level	minutes/yr	minutes/day
kindergarten	36,089	239
grades 1–3	50,434	334
grades 4–8	54,058	358
grades 9–12	64,930	430

—Jonathan Hill, Ed. S. 1990

The four-day week can cut utility, transportation, vehicle maintenance, custodial supply, and substitute teacher costs. Actual savings differ from district to distict, and rise and fall with the economy. Your district will have to determine your own savings. Some rough estimates are provided below.

Potential Reductions in Costs from Changing from Five to Four Day Schedules	
utilities	7%–15%
transportation operations	22%
transportation maintenance	18%
custodial supplies	20%
substitute teachers	25%
staffing changes	as negotiated

If one is concerned about rural school improvement, the question to be asked is "should we continue to spend $10,000 + for busing students to school five days rather than four, or should we reinvest that money to improve the instructional programs which students interact with during the four days that they are in school?"

—Nachtigal, p. 36.

How Do We Get There from Here?

The four-day school week is such a big change that it requires careful planning and community consideration. However, since it has been in place for some time in communities around the country, there are experienced people who can help you plan.

You need to bring all affected parties into the planning, which probably includes everyone in your community. The four-day week offers different advantages to different interest groups, and also raises different questions and problems. Think this through sensibly. Approach people sensitively. Do your homework so you can answer their questions.

Major Roadblocks

In many states, permission for a four-day week requires a change in state law. Those are states that have legislated the number of days students must attend school. In other states, the law specifies only the number of required hours, rather than days. You must establish a schedule that meets the hourly requirement. However,

there will probably be some policy waivers, reports, and other requirements laid down by your state department of education. Find out what these are.

Your local education leaders are your first resource as far as state regulations go. If they are interested in the idea, they will help you. If they are cool to the idea, you will get nowhere until you convince them. You will have to do your research through other means, building the case with which you then convince your leadership. The comparative financial calculations are probably the key consideration for your district leadership. Work these comparative costs out carefully so a good idea doesn't get shot down due to poor arithmetic.

Teachers and classified staff members(your school support people—aides, cooks, janitors, bus drivers) have bargaining organizations. You cannot move forward with a four-day week without them.

Classified staff may fight the idea at first, because one of the ways a four-day week saves money is by cutting support costs. They need to see the advantages for their group. (Note that, depending on how bad your financial situation is, you may be saving their jobs by moving to this alternative.) Also, they win by getting larger blocks of personal time.

Different segments of the classified group will be affected in varying ways. Classroom aides will be affected just like teachers. Secretaries might continue to work a regular week (and might love having a day with no kids around). The same goes for custodians. Cafeteria services are reduced by a day, but may add additional programs and extend the workday of cafeteria workers. Bus drivers are probably affected the most. All these employees need to participate in planning the changes. Local situations will differ

considerably. You will have to do your own homework on these groups. Talk informally to the leadership about the idea. Enlist friends within each group early in the planning. The greatest roadblock to any effort can be the person who feels he or she was ignored in the early stages.

The four-day week employed by two small schools in Colorado allowed the schools to enhance their staff development program:

> *"Perhaps the biggest roadblock to school improvement is finding the time for curriculum work and staff development . . . The four day week frees up a full day for school improvement work. In the Cotopaxi/Westcliffe Project, approximately one Friday a month is scheduled for staff development or curriculum work . . . The inservice education team (two to three people) observes and works with teachers in their classrooms on Thursdays. On Friday the teachers, principals, and superintendents participate in a full day work session . . . By having been in the classrooms the day before, the consultants can make the workshop material applicable to the real needs of the school. The techniques which are introduced in the Friday session are then tried out in the classroom during the month, the consultants observe and work with the teachers in the classroom prior to the next Friday session, and the cycle continues. The teachers and administrators come to each Friday session fresh and ready to focus on the work of the day."*
>
> —Nachtigal, p. 35.

Conclusion

In and of itself the four-day week offers certain advantages discussed above. In addition, it is beautifully suited to some of the other ideas discussed in this book. Both the longer class periods and the noninstructional day lend themselves to activities that draw students out into the community, whether for study or for enterprise development. Furthermore, the self-examination a community must go through while deciding to move to a four-day week is an opportunity to consider other aspects of the school's practice. For example, the community could decide to become more conscientious about staff developmen and build training opportunities into the four-day schedule from the beginning.

Perhaps most important of all is the consensus building that a community must go through when making such a change as this. Many people who have kept their distance from educational decisions are likely to participate in public discussions about a change of this magnitude. This, then, can be the start of broader citizen decisionmaking about education in your community.

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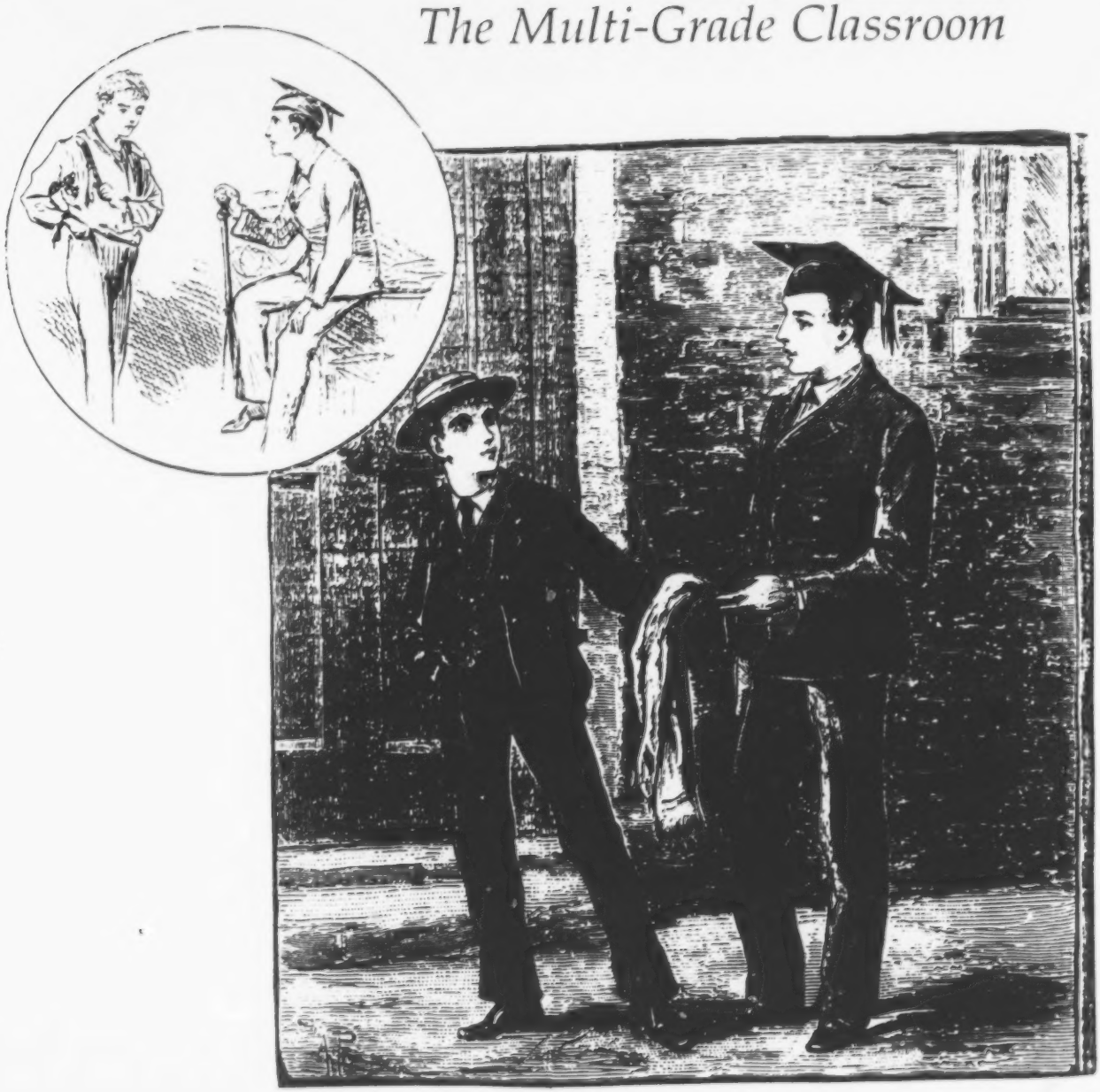
CHAPTER VIII
The Multi-Grade Classroom



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Does your school have classrooms with more than one grade level studying together? Do you believe they provide good education?

One mark of a small school is multi-grade classrooms—students of more than one grade level studying in the same room under the same teacher. In the minds of many teachers, principals, policymakers, and even parents, multi-grade classrooms are a vestige of the past—a symbol of a low-quality school. Putting students of more than one grade level in a single classroom flies in the face of professional expectations about what a classroom should look like and how it ought to be run.

Multi-grade rooms are used to justify consolidating smaller schools into larger ones where there are enough students at each grade level to have single-grade rooms. Multi-grade rooms are used by teachers as an example of poor working conditions. Parents sometimes complain that their children can't possibly be getting as much grade-level instruction in a multi-grade classroom. And so the multi-grade classroom becomes everyone's kicking post.

Surprise! Research reveals that students in well-taught multi-grade classrooms perform as well or better than students in conventional, single-grade classrooms. They perform very well on tests for cognitive skills, such as reading and writing. They do even better on tests measuring "affect"—self-esteem, attitudes toward schools, and enthusiam for learning.

Children in multi-grade classrooms do so well, in fact, that educators are beginning to suggest that techniques employed in successful multi-grade classrooms should be used in all classrooms. What's more, some educators are actually reorganizing conventional classrooms into multi-grade arrangements to improve education.

"... the data clearly support the multi-grade classroom as an equally effective organizational alternative to single-grade instruction. When it comes to student affect, the case for multi-grade organization appears much stronger, with multiple grade students outperforming single-grade students on over 75% of the measures used. One wonders, then, why we do not have more schools organized into multigrade classrooms."
—Miller, 1989, p. 3.

Background

Before the mid 1800's the single-grade classroom was unheard of in most parts of this country. Just 70 years ago, 70 percent of all public schools were one-room classrooms.

The single-grade classroom developed as an administrative convenience, not out of concern for students' needs or improved instruction. Popular demand for schooling and pressure to produce a literate and disciplined labor force resulted in a huge increase in the number of children attending school. This created problems for city-based school administrators who had to cope with an ever increasing number of school-aged children. Educational administrators in big cities turned to the single-grade classroom as a way to more easily manage the large numbers they had to deal with. This so-called scientific management became a mark of the age, eventually affecting rural as well as urban schools.

Critics in the late 19th and early 20th centuries opposed the move to make schools look and work more like factories. They pointed out that it wasn't reasonable to expect all students of the same age level to be at the same stage of development. They argued that it didn't make much sense to organize instruction as though they were. And indeed, research into why students in multi-grade classrooms perform as well or better than other students suggests that multi-grade classrooms do have some inherent advantages.

Why Do Multi-Grade Classrooms Work?

"... interdependency, cooperation, multiple task activities, individualized learning and heterogeneous grouping appear to have emerged out of the requirements of coping with multiple grade levels in a single room."

—Miller, 1989, p. . 133).

Do these sound familiar? They are the learning process methods discussed in The New Basics!

In a nutshell, multi-grade classrooms work because they force teachers to use a variety of instructional methods that are good for learning.

"The American school as a place for learning helps to develop in students a belief that ability, not effort, is the key to success."

—Holloway,1988.

These methods improve student self-perceptions and performance by providing a greater variety of ways that students can learn and can demonstrate their competence. Thus, students and teachers both are less likely to fall into the trap of labeling members of the class, expecting certain students to achieve in all areas, and expecting others to achieve in none. This is key to student motivation, to the belief that their own efforts affect their performance, to the belief in themselves as learners.

"The student who believes that increased effort will have no effect on one's ability to learn will likely be difficult to motivate."

—Miller, 1989, p.122.

Research has shown that students begin their primary grades "believing that their performance and ability are a direct result of their effort "....By the time a student is about in the sixth grade, effort, performance and ability become reversed....Ability is viewed as a kind of fixed quantity that determines the degree to which effort can alter performance"

—Holloway, 1988.

The methods employed in successful multi-grade classrooms, by introducing greater variety into how students learn and how they are evaluated, counteract the negative aspects of the single-ability learning environment.

Pitfalls

Good instruction in a multi-grade classroom doesn't just happen. Teachers of multi-grade classrooms face special challenges that teachers of single-grade classrooms don't. Teaching multi-grade classes requires considerably more planning, organizing, and management skill. It also requires understanding and support from the school principal.

"Although it may not be a deliberate and premeditated strategy, the type of instructional organization utilized will directly affect student views of themselves as successful learners."

—Miller, 1989, p. 22.

Because the single-grade classroom has become the norm, colleges and universities do not train teachers and principals to deal effectively with multi-grade classrooms. Consequently, most teachers feel unprepared, and indeed are unprepared, to handle the situation.

Potential

Fortunately, teacher skill requirements have been clearly defined. Teachers in multi-grade classrooms have been good inventors. They have devised techniques, adopted others, and adapted yet others to accommodate wide ranges of student age, maturity, ability, aptitude, achievement, and learning styles—much wider ranges than found in the normal single-grade classroom. As a result they have developed effective tools and techniques for achieving excellence in the classroom, any classroom.

See the resource list at the end of this chapter for some useful guides, handbooks, articles, books, and other resources for teachers or principals.

How To Make It Work Well

School administrators must give teachers extra planning time and training in the skills required by multi-grade classrooms. The greater the diversity among students in the classroom, the more the teacher has to plan.

Observation in multi-grade classrooms shows that they require teachers who are:

- well organized
- creative and flexible
- willing to work hard
- resourceful
- self-directed
- willing to work closely with the community

These teachers must also have:

- a strong belief in the importance of cooperation and personal responsibility in the classroom
- experience in the grade levels to be taught

To make the multi-grade classroom work well teachers need specific skills in:

- classroom organization
- classroom management and discipline
- instructional organization and curriculum
- instructional delivery and grouping
- self-directed learning
- peer tutoring

Acquiring the ability to control factors in each of these areas enables the multi grade teacher to transform the classroom into a fruitful and exciting environment both for the teacher and for the students.

"Necessity is the mother of invention," runs the old adage. When a problem arises, individuals often devise a tool or a new way of doing things to take care of the problem. Afterwards they find the new way of doing things is a better way. The problem that forced them to seek a solution proves to have been an opportunity in disguise.

When you question the conventional criticism of multi-grade classrooms, you question an educational sacred cow.

• Assemble your data carefully (see the research references in the appendix of this book).

• Develop practical ideas for how to help your school, teacher, or principal gain the necessary skills for running an effective multi-grade classroom.

• Introduce your information and ideas first to someone who has reason to be sympathetic to it, for example, a teacher or principal who is "stuck" with a multi-grade classroom, or a group of parents whose school is under attack for having multi-grade classrooms.

• If you don't already have such classrooms, consider presenting the idea as an experiment. You will need to identify a teacher who is excited by the challenge, and parents who would like their children to participate.

• You may have more luck if you can provide parent volunteers to help the teacher get established with new routines. The volunteers can supervise activities so that the teacher gets sufficient planning time, can work one-on-one or in small groups with the students, and can help the teacher record and evaluate the experience.

• The multi-grade classroom can be presented to administrators as a means of saving money, but only when you have teachers who are able to manage these classrooms effectively. While volunteers may be essential to getting the project off the ground, in the long run the program should depend on them only as much as the rest of your school does.

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Resources

Bruce Miller. *The Multigrade Classroom: A Resource Handbook for Small, Rural Schools.* Portland, Oregon: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1989.

Available from: Rural Education Program
NW Regional Ed. Lab.
101 SW Main, Suite 500
Portland, OR 97204

This 264-page handbook features practical, comprehensive plans for making a mulit-grade classroom work. The discussion is conversational and easy to understand. A thorough guide for teachers. Chapter 1 reviews and discusses the results of research into the comparative performance of students in multi-grade classrooms. It provides the information you need to justify the appropriateness of multi-grade classrooms. This chapter also identifies the problems and needs of rural school teachers in multi-grade classrooms, and identifies key issues such teachers face and the demands placed on them.

Bruce Miller. *A Training Guide for the Multigrade Classroom: A Resourcebook for Small, Rural Schools.* Portland, OR: NWREL, 1990.

Available from: Rural Education Program
NW Regional Ed. Lab.
101 SW Main, Suite 500
Portland, OR 97204

This 70-page companion to the previous handbook is a response to the lack of training opportunities for teachers interested in improving multi-grade instruction or considering the use of multi-grade programs. Few colleges or universities offer such instruction.

Much of the guide's material will be useful for master teachers with extensive multi-grade classroom experience who want to train novice teachers or teachers new to the multi-grade classroom.

Smith, Dan T. and Alan J. DeYoung. "Big School vs. Small School: Conceptual, Empirical, and Political Perspectives on the Re-emerging Debate," *Journal of Rural and Small Schools*, 2:2, pp. 2–11.

This report outlines major arguments for and against consolidation, and offers research findings that are relevant to the discussion of multi-grade classrooms in thinly populated rural areas. It also includes some history of consolidation.

CHAPTER IX
Education and Technology

For many Americans, future employment and advancement opportunities will depend on their having a well developed ability to process, sort, analyze and digest new and quickly changing information. (See Chapter II.) A key factor in the proper handling of information is the appropriate use and understanding of new technologies. Fortunately for those who live in isolated areas, the need for citizens with sophisticated information processing skills has grown along with the development of technologies that can deliver information and instruction virtually anywhere. If properly implemented and backed up by well trained teachers and technicians, these information technologies can deliver access to an enormous variety of information, a wider selection of course offerings (for teachers as well as students), and can provide the ability to work and communicate simply with other students and teachers in nearby communities or around the world.

"The amount and nature of 'distance' in distance education is not important. Distance can be a product of social, political, or economic conditions as well as geographical separation."
—Batey and Cowell.

These new tools include such things as satellite communications systems, "electronic blackboards," computers, laser discs, TV's, videos and plain old telephones. Some more sophisticated setups might have several classrooms linked by cable or satellite with two-way closed circuit television, allowing one teacher to interact with students in schools in nearby communities or across the country. Audiographic systems can connect teachers with remote students through voice communications coupled with changeable "still" computer screens. Much simpler scenarios involve "stand alone" (self-contained with little need for teacher involvement) computer systems where students work through an instructional program on their own, perhaps covering material that supplements regular class materials, or working on skills that need extra attention.

Attempting, in these few pages, to sort through the above and the many other different technologies available to small rural schools, would be an impossible task. These technologies are fast evolving as are the innovative methods teachers are using to incorporate them into their instruction. Instead, we will attempt to give you some idea of the potential uses for these resources and some direction on where you as a citizen might be able to assist in their implementation.

There is no simple way to categorize educational technologies. Most of the hardware has many varied uses. However, the premises behind these uses can be roughly divided into three main areas:

1. Bringing courses in from outside the school
These could be satellite telecourses from a variety of providers, locally or regionally shared classes transmitted by cable, or telephone lines; or simply video tapes. Courses may be for any level but usually focus on advanced placement or teacher training. Depending on the sophistication of the delivery systems the courses offer varying degrees of interaction between the students and teachers.

2. Computer-Assisted Instruction
These include simple microcomputers with elementary level software programs teaching everything from basic phonics to addition and multiplication. Adding a CD-ROM player can give older students access to informative data bases like encyclopedias or the Reader's Guide. Other CD-ROM's have include elaborate multimedia programs for all ages with music, video clips, still photos and text blended into one thematic package.

3. Microcomputer Communications Systems
Add a modem unit to most computers and they can communicate through telephone lines with other computers (and thus with other people). These systems include local and regional electronic bulletin boards and international computer networks. Students and teachers can access libraries, data bases and the expertise and participation of their peers. Collaborative online projects can involve any number of widespread students.

A common concern among advocates of educational technology is the need for well trained teachers who can fully use the technology to take advantage of its educational and cost-saving potential. As we have stressed in other parts of this book, many of the alternative ideas presented here will not be effective unless serious commitment is made to providing adequate training opportunities for instructors. The following story demostrates this point.

"What might be possible? Consider a school with 25 students at each of four grade levels, 9-12. Assume the school is located in a rural and isolated area, is separately organized, and is governed by its own elected school board. The school employs four teachers and thereby has a teacher to pupil ratio that is unusually low for a small rural high school striving to offer a rich and specialized curriculum.

The four teachers in this school have been specially trained. They are generalists in the sense that their training placed emphasis on breadth rather than depth of academic and professional training. In fact their professional training has taught them to be managers of instructional resources, a form of training not unlike that provided to librarians.

These teachers understand the nature of how students learn different subjects. They can help students learn a wide range of subjects, including foreign languages, mathematics, science, literature, history, and geography. They do not have a deep knowledge of each subject, however. Rather, they know where and how to access such knowledge and they know how to share it with their students. Moreover, the classrooms have been equipped so that the necessary detailed subject matter expertise is **readily** at hand.... In addition, these teachers use programs that do draw upon their academic expertise, but which also require ready access to other resources. These other resources might take the form of a consultant on retainer who is hired to respond to calls (via telephone or television) or who might make periodic visits to the site (Wall, 1985). The outside consultant and the on-site teacher work together, developing the curriculum, managing the instructional process, and assessing student progress. Some teachers in this setting—depending on their skills, experience, and professional responsibilities—work with several consultants, each dealing with a separate subject.

Thanks to telephone and data transmission lines, there are additional strategies and techniques to deliver instruction. For example, two-way television makes it possible for students in this isolated rural setting to join classes taking place elsewhere. The on-site teacher provides day-to-day supervision and manages contact with the instructor at a distant site. Students have the opportunity to interact directly with the outside instructor as well as with classmates from other different sites, all of which are in voice and visual communication with one another.

This scenario is admittedly idealized. Although it holds open the possibility of dramatically enhanced curricular offerings in small rural schools, its realization probably hinges on the ability of the teachers and the quality and nature of their training. It is no small undertaking to become an academic generalist, to stay informed about the resource base, and to become an effective manager of instruction in the hypothetical school described above.

If educators concerned with small rural schools are interested in realizing this vision (and there is ample evidence that they are), the **substantial** changes must occur in how teachers in small rural schools are trained. As a result, the academic qualities expected of both educators and their students might be expected to rise. The combined effect of changes in teacher training, technologies, and classroom instruction could well cause the number of teachers employed in small rural schools to fall, at least as compared to present norms."

—Monk, p. 2.

Whatever your needs, there is probably some form of technology that can provide it. But beware. As the title of Bruce Barker's speech on the subject reminds us, "All That Glitters is Not Gold." Two of the common hopes of technology advocates (expansion of curriculum offerings and cost savings by freeing up teachers time) are still highly debatable topics. The debates center in part on whether the addition of technology-based "programmed instruction" is able to really free up teachers, or whether it will actually involve more of their time.

SOME HASSLES

The relatively few large providers of satellite courses may cause the nation to move toward an homogeneous curriculum.

Working with outside services or other schools may require schedule changes to make program times match up.

Technical support is often limited in rural areas.

Most schools do not have telephone lines installed in the classrooms.

"If programmed instruction merely supplements on-site teaching resources (that is, if programmed materials with stand-alone qualities cannot be developed and widely used), their potential for making small rural schools more viable will be minimal. New course offerings will require additional teachers with subject matter expertise, just as is currently the case. And no teaching resources will be freed for other uses thanks to the arrival of programmed materials (Monk, 1989). On the other hand, a simplistic view of what is required will not serve development well. The requirement for an on-site teacher is not an all-or-nothing matter. It is not so much a question of whether programmed instruction can succeed without any involvement of an on-site teacher as it is a question about the kind of skills and experience the on-site teacher will need to have. If learning programs can be developed which ***reduce,*** *but do not eliminate the level of subject matter expertise required of on-site teachers, then there can still be considerable potential for improved curriculum and instruction in small rural schools."*

—Monk, p. 1.

However this debate works out as the technologies and materials improve, the need for teacher training in the use of these methods will most likely remain constant.

Quick Guide to Current Educational Technologies

Audioconferencing: Not really a new technology, audioconferencing is essentially an elaborate conference call using telephones to allow everyone in each of several remote classes to speak with each other. The teacher has direct interaction with the students (just like a regular phone call), so questions are answered as they arise.

Audiographics: Basically adds pictures to audioconferencing. Along with the telephone conference, a television screen in the classroom allows the remote teacher to send computer images—sort of an electronic blackboard. Very helpful in courses where graphic display is necessary (geometry, sciences, art).

CD-ROM: Stands for Compact Disc-Read Only Memory. These discs look like the new music discs only they hold data, video, audio, and software programs instead of music. When used with a computer and a special CD-ROM reader, a single disc can provide an unprecedented amount of information that can be called up in a matter of seconds. One disc currently holds an entire encyclopedia including pictures, short video segments, music clips and sound effects. The student can see, hear and read all of this while sitting in front of a computer screen. Needless to say, this is an incredible independent study tool for people of all ages. The assembly of so much information in such an easily accessible form allows students and teachers quick and easy access to resources normally found only in larger city or university libraries.

Broadcast Television: "Sesame Street" is the classic example of what has been called "educational" television. Such programming tends to supplement regular courses rather than instructionally supplant them. So, while one way television and prerecorded video tapes can offer additional material to classes, they do not replace courses or offer the cost savings of reduced teacher requirements.

Satellite Delivered Instruction: Recent years have seen a rise in the number of satellite instruction providers. These vendors now offer a full range of staff development programs and upper level high-school courses including language, science, and math courses. Not as much work has been done with expanding these offerings below the secondary level. Most of the courses use a telephone call-in system to allow remote students to interact with teachers as the students view the course like a TV show.

Two Way Video: This technology is expensive but many feel it offers students the most involving form of distance education currently available. Participating schools set up the equivalent of a studio/classroom with cameras and large screen televisions. This arrangement allows each classroom to both broadcast and receive, thus, teachers that normally only receive broadcasts can now also send telecourses. An outstanding math teacher can "teach" in several regional classrooms at once without leaving her home classroom. Down the hall from her, students may be having a class from the social studies teacher across the county. Due to their usually prohibitive costs, these systems are often set up with cooperation from cable or telephone companies.

If your group is thinking about getting involved with a new educational technology program or helping to upgrade your current systems, consider these guidelines:

RECYCLE

Try to use the resources your community already has. Chances are the hardware is not being used as much as it could be. But be careful. Salespeople may tell you that you should forget most of that old stuff you bought back in '79. And they may be right. Lots of time and energy can be wasted trying to get disparate or obsolete equipment to work with new educational software. Then again, if you do need to upgrade to new equipment, try to make sure the school system makes good use of the old hardware. Even an antiquated computer can usually still teach someone how to type, do simple word processing, or can be used as a communications station.

PLAN AHEAD

Any new system should be flexible, both in its ability to offer a variety of course offerings and in its adaptability to changes in your schools needs. If your area is due to get cable TV or fiber optic telephone lines very soon, a satellite dish may not be a useful longterm purchase. Remember, computers themselves can be used for a wide range of educational, administrative and communication functions. Grading and accounting can happen on the same machine that teaches ABC's.

STAY ON TRACK

Technology questions are by their nature just that—technical. There are many other ideas in this book that do not require detailed knowledge. Don't get bogged down in the details, let experts and well trained teachers work that out. Be careful not to spend more time and money developing and fixing your technology then you spend advancing your goals of school and community improvement. Use the technologies for what they are—tools to achieve an educational purpose, not ends in themselves.

Technology in the Community

If you want to help keep the technology experience as reality-based as other elements in the schools curriculum, you will need to get out in the community and see what businesses are using: computers, faxes, telexes, satellite communications and other tools. Knowing what is out there can give you an idea of where the school can pick up used or donated equipment. This can be a fine project for a class in business, office management, math, science, economics or technical electronics. The students get to see what type of equipment is used in which real-life applications.

You will also need knowledge and skills. Most communities have a few technical experts who would love to know that their knowledge is helping education. (Remember that all decisions should start from a teacher's knowledge of students' needs, not technological allure). The local telephone repair person, bank employees, TV service people, insurance agents, all are folks whose jobs may touch on the technologies you need to know about. Bring these people into the school as coaches. Have them meet with school personnel to discuss what's available locally in terms of services and support. Find out if students could utilize their equipment in the evenings or sit in with them as apprentices.

Bringing Courses in from Outside

Many of the successful applications of satellite, cable or telephone delivered course offerings are brought to the school by a regional organization. The benefits of group buying discounts, the need for a high level of technical expertise, and the coordination of schedules and resources often keep individual schools or systems from undertaking such projects alone. We suggest you contact school authorities at many levels to encourage regional investigation of such systems.

Be Careful

"Opportunity For Exploitation—How Can You Tell the Good Guys from the Bad?

A severe drawback to districts becoming involved in new distance learning technologies is the opportunity for exploitation which exists. The vast majority of districts—and certainly the small, rural districts most often interested in expanding capabilities through technology —have no one knowledgeable in educational technology and most often must rely on outside expertise (where available) or are forced into taking the word of equipment suppliers or brokers.

As with any new enterprise, there has emerged a whole new entrepreneural area for persons/groups/agencies acting as vendors, brokers, or consultants to school districts interested in implementing the various distance learning technologies. There simply are, right now, no hard and fast rules about cost containment, reasonableness of fees, or uniqueness of the services being provided.

In the area of Instruction by Satellite, many fly-by-night home satellite dealers have thrust their products on naive districts opting for the lowest cost equipment with no thought of what happens when the equipment breaks down. The National Rural Electric Association, on the other hand, with highly honorable intentions, has encouraged their local member affiliates to consider the donation of a satellite dish and receiving equipment to districts within their service area. Many districts in Colorado, Missouri, Oklahoma, etc. have now received the free equipment, but remain unable to do anything with it or have no idea what can be done with it."

—Hobbs, 1988..

Computers Today–Child's Play

"The first revolution in educational computing was a flop because the model of education was the wrong model. Computer-aided instruction flunked because "teaching machines" were designed according to a model of education in which knowledge was regarded as a commodity to be transferred from the teacher to the student.

Today, there is a push for a computer education revolution that operates under a different kind of model, where learning is a process of discovery. Children are natural scientists; they thrive when they can learn by co-exploring with their teachers, not when acting as passive recipients for a predigested curriculum. Kids who program computers can learn more than kids who are programmed by computers."

—Rheingold. p. 40.

Far simpler than the implementation and coordination of outside courses is the use of microcomputers in the classroom setting. Many of today's small personal computers are more powerful than the ones that went to the moon in 1969. The changes in the way that people interact with these teaching/learning machines has dramatically simplified the introduction of computers to the public at large.

Whether or not computers are for you or the faculty at your school is really a moot point. The children already have a jump on the adults. Whether it's caused by their inquisitive minds or their exposure to video games, many children today have a knack for adapting to new technologies. Remember, for the little children especially, computers may seem no newer or stranger than pencil or paper.

Computer-Assisted Instruction

Computer-assisted instruction used to mean teaching people how to use computers. While there is certainly a place in every community for courses about computers, simply learning to use the machines is not the only educational benefit they offer. The tremendous strength of computer instruction lies in the many different subjects accessible with education software and the high degree of personalized interactive involvement the new programs offer.

In one day, on one very busy computer:
a preschooler can enjoy learning the alphabet;
a fifth grader can learn the names and locations of the nations of northern Africa;
a ninth grader can watch the simulated rotations of the planets;
an eleventh grader might polish her Russian verbs, then send an electronic message to a pen pal in the Ukraine;
a senior can write essays for college applications and search a far off data base for leads on financial aid possibilities;
a teacher can prepare next week's lesson plans and average grades for the period;
a local business person can come in that night and do some bookkeeping.
All this on one computer. Same hardware, different software.

Telecommunications

The information age isn't in some distant future. It's at your finger tips when you pick up your phone. That same tone system that dials and communicates through your touch tone phone allows computers equipped with modems to use the phone lines to talk with other computers.

Today's teachers and learners need to be aware of the vast and growing information sources that can be reached from any location through simple phone lines and a personal computer equipped with a modem. The modem acts as a translation device taking information from one computer's memory and putting it into a common language that other computers (and you at home) can understand. Using such a setup, a student in Franklin, West Virginia, could call up a number in San Francisco and view the contents of conversations, discussion groups, databases or graphics libraries that were posted to a west coast system. The systems virtually never sleep and allow an exchange of ideas and information that is free of the time constraints of normal conferences and conversations.

Teachers are using electronic mail to allow students to participate in hundreds of regional, national and international projects with other students worldwide. Through systems like National Geographic's KidsNet and the Institute for Global Communications' Econet, students can share ideas and information on pressing common concerns. On topics ranging from acid rain testing to the best design for an engineering project to foreign electronic penpals, students are able to share ideas and break down barriers of physical, social or geographical separation.

Many state and regional education systems now maintain a central electronic bulletin board system (BBS) for teachers and students. These systems allow teachers to ask questions of other teachers and are especially useful for answering technical questions or for offering up information on new techniques and resources. Bulletin boards are also a great place to find kindred spirits who may have been in your situation before. The dialogues on these systems have led many on to new tracks and often allow like-minded individuals the first chance to connect. Out of these conversations alliances have been born, networks and organization have started and online friendships have blossomed. But, you don't even have to send messages to receive them. Passive readers of BBS messages are welcome though the systems work best when everyone offers some information of their own.

Bulletin boards and computer user groups are great places to find technical experts who may be willing to help out in your school. Call around to computer stores in your area to find out who the contact people are.

The Future

The following story should give you some idea of what the future may hold. As the title suggests, that future is now for schools currently piloting programs. In time it will be happening in your community. Help see that your resources are well used and your money well spent. Remember, the finest machine in the world will solve no problems if it can't be turned on.

This article was downloaded from the networks. It appeared in the Online Journal of Distance Education, *an electronic publication compiled at the University of Alaska. Sally Laughon continues her work at introducing telecommunications as a tool for working across the curriculum. Her electronic address is included for those who might wish to reach her for advice or comment.*

Telecommunications . . . . The Future is Here!

By Sally Laughon

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"I speak German at home, but my dad wants me to practice reading and writing it. Can I find someone in Germany to write?" "Have you heard from anyone in Korea? I'd like to communicate with someone there." "Oh my gosh! I think I solved it. I thought this problem would take forever!"

These remarks pepper the conversations among students in computer classes, in the Telecommunications Club and with the Upper School computer teacher.

Two years ago, North Cross School received international electronic addresses as part of a pilot project, the Virginia Tech Educational and Reseach Network (VERN), linking four secondary schools in Virginia with colleges and universities across the state. The addresses gave North Cross students and teachers the ability to communicate with others across the world using established electronic networks.

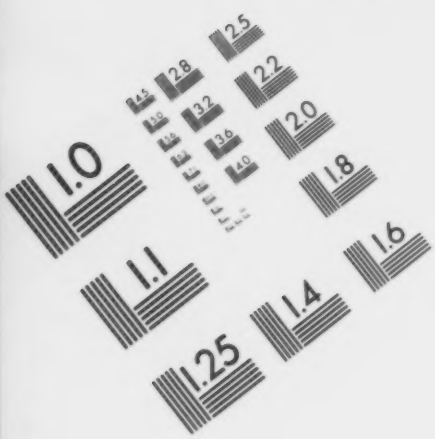
The Virginia Tech project orginated to teach secondary educators and students about data communications, to learn about training needed for teachers, and to develop a group of well-informed and skilled users.

Today, North Cross has five dedicated telephone lines and nine computers equipped for telecommunications. Five computers on carts can be used in classrooms throughtout the buildings. Telephone jacks positioned strategically in 20 rooms allow easy access for a myriad of projects that span the curriculum.

When the pilot project began, two trained teachers spent time learning technical skills and researching, coordinating and compiling project ideas for each curriculum area. At first, teachers did not recognize the incredible potential for classroom use. Once skills were mastered and electronic mail from several dozen online discussion groups had been read, it became easier to involve other teachers.

In the Upper School, communication activities promptly became part of Computer Applications classes. First we learned a few skills by reading electronic mail. We searched for biographical sketches posted by other students wanting to communicate. We wrote our own introductions and sent them for world-wide distribution. When pen pal exchange became too voluminous, those activities were moved to time blocks outside of class.

All computer students learn how to use the online Virginia Tech Library System (VTLS) and how to utilize the Dialog data bases for research projects and papers. Over 75 online data bases allow searching through topics in books, magazines, thesis papers, professional journals and newspaper articles. Full text articles from national newspapers allow instant research from a medium notoriously tedious to use in the past.



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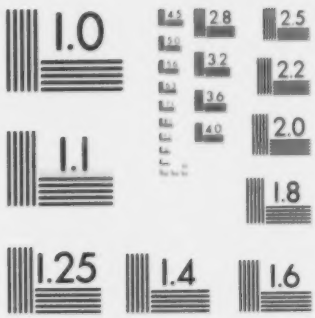

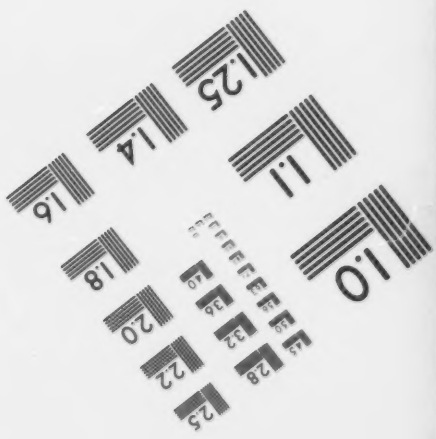

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Dialog users uncover over 5,000 articles written about "Noriega and drugs" in magazines during the year 1989. Because of the overwhelming volume of information available, effective use of online data bases demands specific and narrow topics.

In addition to using networks for research and corresponding with pen pals, Pascal programming students collaborate with another class to analyze, define, write and evaluate sections of a programming project. Each class exchanges completed modules and the pieces are merged together for compilation into one working program.

Twice a month, computer students print a math problem located on a computer in Indiana. Solutions may require a formula, trial and error, combinations, or "Just thinking about it" as one student explained. This problem solving activity is the beginning of another online project planned for math teachers and students.

The Telecommunications Club is accumulating a list of questions designed to explore cultural differences among students across the globe. With research information, guidance from the histroy department, and assistance from our international exchange students, we plan to design a questionnaire and submit it to several electronic discussion groups to learn what makes our cultures unique.

Ninth grade English students wrote a short essay answering the questions "Who am I and what can I do to improve the future of the world?" These essays were sent to the international discussion group, KIDS-91. This electronic list was developed for students ages 10 to 15. The manager of the group lives in Norway, but responses to the "Who am I" questions and other messages are housed on computers in Canada and North Dakota.

Science students share lab results and other data with distant classes. A larger pool of data enables more precise evaluation of results. Students and teachers post questions to professionals in the scientific community, wherever they are located. Discussions between the AP Biology classes at North Cross and the Roanoke Valley Governor's School culminated in a joint meeting and panel discussion on the historic implications of the Biosphere II project.

French students can correspond with native speaking contemporaries and other French students around the world. Interestingly, many native French students want us to write in English to help them with their studies!

When telecommunications came to North Cross, we began to explore the remarkable and exciting opportunities for learning. Our teachers have embraced this technology with such enthusiasm that last fall, a second phone line was needed for the Upper School. the networks have opened a window to the global community of information, educators and students but we realize we have just begun to tap the vast resources available to us."

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Linking for Learning: A New Course for Education. 1989. OTA Report Brief. Office of Technology Assessment. U.S. Congress. Washington, DC.

Rheingold, Howard. 1991. "In Search of a Nintendo for the Mind." *Publish*. May. pp.40-42. San Francisco, CA.

Whisler, Jo Sue. 1988. "Distance Learning Technologies: An Aid to Restructuring Schools?" *Noteworthy*. Feb. 1988. Mid-continent Educational Laboratory. Aurora, CO.

Resources

Office of Technology Assessment
Linking for Learning:A New Course for Education.
Available (for a fee) from
Superintendent of Documents
U.S. Printing Government Printing Office
Washington, D.C. 20402-9325
202/783-3238
Stock #052-003-01170-1

Summaries available free from
OTA, U.S. Congress
Washington, DC 20510-8025
202/224-8996

Signal • Communication Tools for the Information Age

A Whole Earth Catalog
Kevin Kelly, Editor
A mind opening catalog that offers a wide view of information beyond educational technology. Very good on how-to book reviews for computers and telecommunications. Written for general readers.

Whole Earth Review
Summer 1991
This issue of has a series of articles on electronic communications with simple explanations of modems, BBS's, and networks. Also discusses successful community applications of telecommunications outside of the educational setting. Highly recommended.
Both available from:
Whole Earth Review
27 Gate Five Road
Sausalito, CA 94965

How to Look It Up Online
Alfred Glossbrenner
1987; 486 pp.

The Complete Handbook of Personal Computer Communications
Alfred Glossbrenner
1986; 512 pp.

Glossbrenner's books (these and several others) are wonderful tools for people working with personal computers. Published by
St. Martin's Press, New York, NY
212 674-5151

CHAPTER X
Getting Organized and Gathering Information

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No matter what you decide to do, you will need to organize help. Organizing people to achieve results is almost entirely a matter of identifying common points among them. You start, very likely, with a friend who sees the world much as you do—lots of points in common between you. You want to end up with a whole school, a whole community, a whole district, and even the governor of your state acknowledging certain points in common with you, and therefore helping you achieve your goals.

There are two ways to go about this. One, you can start with a friend (and many common points) and work your way slowly upward and outward, eliminating some common points as you add more people. This is probably an easier job than you think if you take it step by step. In the end, you'll have many people recognizing a few key points in common.

The key here is to work step by step. Take the time with each person or level of people to explore with them how their interests and yours coincide, and what solutions might work for all of you. The long-term benefits of this approach can hardly be overestimated. More people = more perspectives = more ideas. Furthermore, no one feels that something has been forced on them without regard for their concerns.

You can also organize large numbers of people around one point you know they share, and then together develop more common points. This relates closely to management concepts like "strategic planning," in which all agree that a

Ask yourself what issue will achieve your particular ends and will enable you to find common cause with enough other people to give you political clout.

certain goal needs to be attained, and everyone works out how to get there.

Let's say your chosen common point is more state money for rural schools. Who is likely to share this common point? Parents whose children attend rural schools, administrators of rural schools, teachers in rural schools, and other rural residents may all share it. You clarify what these different people's stake might be in the funding of rural schools, and you recruit them to your cause accordingly.

In this case, the key is identifying the right starting point. Let's say that instead of choosing funding as a starting point, you choose "Defending my local school from consolidation." Some possible results are that:

- you would have had fewer people to recruit to your cause; and
- some of the people that would join you around the funding issue would fight you on the consolidation issue.

Needs & Strengths

Whether you start large or small, the process involves finding ways to meet different parties' "felt needs" or interests. To take the example above, your superintendent's "felt need" is money with which to run the school system. The superintendent may want to consolidate your school in order to get that money. If you can get the money without consolidating, you have met your felt need and your superintendent's.

Note, however, that once that need is removed and you have successfully changed the funding formula in your state, and money is pouring into the coffers of rural schools all over your state (!), someone may still want to consolidate your school for other reasons. Now you are working with a different felt need. You will have to start again, finding ways to address this new issue.

Success breeds success. Set yourself lots of achievable steps to build confidence. While your goal may be to improve state funding for rural schools, recognize the smaller successes along the way. You have a success when your district superintendent agrees with your goal, even if the governor doesn't yet agree.

Build on strength. Assess needs from within an overall sense of what you have, not what you lack. Ask any ball coach how much is won by attitude. When your attitude is positive, a scrimmage, even if you lose, is a chance to hone your skills.

Do We Start Big or Small?

Pick your approach according to your temperament, your community standing, and who your allies are. (See "What Level Should We Work On?" in Appendix D.)

If you are shy, feel powerless, feel unable to command the attention of others, or are just exceedingly busy, you may want to start small, with a project that can be readily completed and that has popular appeal. Make sure that word trickles out about it, and you will find that others become motivated by your success. They, too, may generate projects, and you're off and running.

If you command significant attention within your community (either as an individual or as part of the group with which you are working), or if you hold a position of leadership (civic leader, bank president, school board member, superintendent, principal, president of the teachers organization), you may decide to start big. There are many resources to help you organize an entire community or do comprehensive planning within a system, such as your school system or your school. (For example, the Outcomes-Driven Development Model pioneered in Johnson City, NY. Contact Larry Rowe, (607)770-1200 or consult the resources in the Appendix.)

The danger inherent in such planned efforts is that someone will feel over-controlled by the process, and someone else will feel left out. A delicate touch, sincere openness to everyone's contributions, and dedication to seeking out the "invisible" members of your community are essential to true success with this process.

If you need organizing advice we recommend you contact someone with a successful track record. One group that has done wonders for rural education in Iowa and is open to inquiries is People United for Rural Education (P.U.R.E.), R.R. 3 Box 41, Alden, IA 50006, (515) 855-4332. Ask for Janet Kenney.

The Long Haul

You will be most effective in the long run if you work on several levels at once. Start a small project to build a track record and use that to organize a bigger effort; or start at both levels at once, taking lots of time on your big project while getting gratification from smaller undertakings.

This is a good way to use people of differing talents. Your "doers" will want to get started on something while your "people people" begin a wide-based organizing process. You may have volunteers who want to see a small completed project, and a civic leader or superintendent who is willing to coordinate a community process.

A citizen's group in Kentucky plays an important role in state education decision-making. Contact The Pritchard Committee for Academic Excellence, Box 1658, Lexington, KY 40592. (606)233-9849.

"In one community, after a long and heated discussion of educational problems,, the moderator asked people to say what they could do personally to make needed changes. Many had difficulty envisioning how they could be effective in dealing with entrenched problems.

Finally, one staff person—a staff member in the much criticized superintendent's office—volunteered: ' I can change the way I do my job.'

That offer prompted a business leader who had been reluctant to invest in what he saw as a badly managed system to say, 'If you can do that, maybe there is something I can do to help you."

—Matthews & McAfee. p.20.

The Snowball Effect

A committee of a rural West Virginia school's parent-teacher organization (PTO) was asked to assess weakness in student's academic performance. Teachers identified creative writing as the greatest concern. The group's research led them to a state-based program, The West Virginia Writing Project, that uses teachers to teach other teachers effective ways to teach writing. One member of the group knew of a competitive grant program offered by the State Department of Education for small-scale school improvement projects. The group won a grant from the state to offer their teachers two days of training from the Writing Project. The teachers were so enthusiastic that the following fall, with combined PTO and teacher money, they arranged for a full credit graduate course to be taught in the district by the Writing Project.

Teachers who attended generated a second grant proposal dealing with the links between writing, art, and local heritage. This time the local committee for the arts helped design and fund their proposal.

From the initial committee of five, the total project to date has directly involved about 30 adults (and innumerable students), with different adults taking leadership at different times. The project expanded from the initial effort of a single school to the eventual inclusion of four schools and the county-wide arts council. This was done simply by looking for possible shared concerns, and inviting others to join in.

Start something. Stick to it. It will grow.

Getting Started

There is no one right way to proceed, but there are some operating principles.

1. Find kindred spirits—others who share your concerns and are prepared to work with you.

2. Gather information—inform yourself about
   - the issues,
   - the research, and
   - other people's thoughts, deeds and plans.

3. Complete the worksheets in this handbook. Use them and the resources from the National Committee for Citizens in Education listed at the end of this chapter to select goals and create action plans.

4. Build alliances that meet different groups' needs—how can you meet your needs and your teacher's and administrator's needs at the same time? Everyone has a stake, and every group has something important to contribute to the process; your results will be stronger with those contributions in your plan.

5. Intervene at the lowest possible effective level; solve problems at the lowest possible level.

6. "Fight" only at the highest possible level—bring as many levels on board with your plans as you can. People have a strong tendency to point to the next guy up as the blockage or the "enemy;" this gets in the way of building alliances, and frequently results in "shooting yourself in the foot."

7. Develop widespread public discussion:
   - Write letters to the editor of your local paper.

   - Invite your school board members to your PTO meeting to share their opinions and to make sure that they, too, are informed.

• Host a student essay day on the issues (make sure to narrow down the key issues you want to address, and state the essay assignment simply).

• Host a student (or public leader) panel discussion or debate on the issues.

• Circulate a speaker list to your civic groups and encourage them to host speakers on the issues.

• Ask your school board to sponsor a citizen's committee to study the issues, and report the group's activities in the local newspaper.

8. If you indeed pursue widespread public discussion, your next steps will gradually become clear. Possible steps range all the way from working public consensus into local school board decisions to organizing for political action at the state (or even the federal) level to win the support needed to implement your goals.

Whatever your own opinion on particular issues, you serve your school and your community best when you work toward agreement about what matters and what solutions are best.

"When we talk deliberately and work through an issue, perspectives change. We see what is happening and who is affected more clearly.... Opinions interact with one another and are transformed into more shared and reflective judgements. If the working through goes on long enough, common ground, a sense of politically supportive actions, emerges.

—Matthews and McAfee, p. 18.

A citizen's group in West Virginia offers these tips:

Organizing A Group

- Meet regularly and often.

- Think about how you will conduct your meetings. Put chairs in a circle so people have good face-to-face contact.

- Recognize that you will have a core group that shoulders the primary responsibility. This core group must keep the larger group informed, whether through formal meetings or an informal telephone network.

- Give the larger group specific tasks—writing letters, making phone calls, turning out for particular events, contributing money.

- Give your core group assignments according to interests and abilities—unless your group is very small, don't try to have everyone do everything.

- Discuss everything. If conflict within the group cannot be resolved, it is sometimes best to take no group action. The unity of the group is more important to its long-term success than any one action.

Doing Your Homework and Minding Your Manners

- Information is power. Do your homework.

- Do your own research.

- Become familiar with your local county board, your school PTO, your principals and superintendent, key state legislators (especially the house and senate education committee chairs), your state superintendent and state board.

- Get to know school laws. Never accept as fact what a board member or an administrator says.

- Check information yourself. Employ the "scientific method"—verify one source's information with another.

- Always be civil and polite. There is a place for impassioned testimony, but always control your anger and use its energy wisely.

- Be persistent.

Working with Your School Board

• Promote caring, intelligent people to run for your local board of education. Look for "diggers"—persistent people who speak their minds and who ask questions.

• Keep in close contact with the board members you seat—support them *in* office, not just *for* office.

• Keep reminding board members that they have the final say.

• Don't accept only one plan from an administration. Have the board demand ample time to discuss the plan, request changes, and vote on policy.

• Go to every board meeting and stay to the end. Don't let boards make important decisions when you are not there.

• Put yourselves and your issues on the board's agenda.

• What you have to say is important—once you begin vocalizing your concerns, it gets easier.

Listening

Effective organizing requires listening.
Effective negotiating requires listening.
Effective lobbying requires listening.
Effective planning requires listening.
(Do you detect a theme here?)

If you need organizing advice we recommend you contact someone with a successful track record. One group that has done wonders for rural education in Iowa and is open to inquiries is
People United for Rural Education (P.U.R.E._)
R.R. 3 Box 41
Alden , IA 50006
(515)855-4332.
Ask for Janet Kenney.

People with high levels of established power can accomplish their goals by refusing to listen. They may, by that method, get what they want. But they will not rule wisely or democratically. You can do better.

Learn to listen beyond what people are saying to get at the roots of their underlying concerns. Learn to control your knee-jerk responses long enough to ponder another's perspective.

> *"This requires more than listening to other points of view. It calls for us to go beyond seeing others as we see ourselves, as though we were all alike. The challenge is to appreciate how something would seem to people different from us—but without trying to become someone else.... The reason this distinction is important is that it keeps us from the politically disastrous assumption that everyone is alike."*
>
> *—Mathews and McAffee, p. 16*

When The Going Gets Rough

"Any method of negotiation may be fairly judged by three criteria: It should produce a wide agreement if agreement is possible. It should be efficient. And it should improve or at least not damage the relationship between the parties. (A wise agreement can be defined as one which meets the legitimate interests of each side to the extent possible, resolves conflicting interests fairly, is durable, and takes community interests into account.)"

—Fisher and Ury, p. 4.

Below is an annotated table of contents from *Getting To Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*, by Roger Fisher and William Ury (Penguin Books, 1981). By itself, this outline constitutes a tip sheet for negotiating in difficult situations. All text is taken from the book.

1. Don't Bargain Over Positions

When negotiators bargain over positions, they tend to lock themselves into those positions.... As more attention is paid to positions, less attention is devoted to meeting the underlying concerns of the parties. Agreement becomes less likely.... The result is frequently an agreement less satisfactory to each side than it could have been.... In contrast to positional bargaining, the principled negotiation method of focusing on basic interests, mutually satisfying options, and fair standards typically results in a wise agreement.

2. Separate the People From the Problem

A major consequence of the "people problem" in negotiation is that the parties' relationship tends to become entangled with their discussions of substance.... Deal with people problems directly; don't try to solve them with substantive concessions.

3. Focus on Interests, Not Positions

Interests motivate people; they are the silent movers behind the hubbub of positions.... For every interest there usually exist several possible positions that could satisfy it.... When you look behind opposed positions for the motivating

interests, you can often find an alternative position which meets not only your interests but theirs as well.

4. Invent Options for Mutual Gain

Skill at inventing options is one of the most useful assets a negotiator can have.... To invent creative options, you will need (1) to separate the act of inventing options from the act of judging them; (2) to broaden the options on the table rather than look for a single answer; (3) to search for mutual gains; and (4) to invent ways of making their decisions easy.

5. Insist on Using Objective Criteria

The more you bring standards of fairness, efficiency, or scientific merit to bear on your particular problem, the more likely you are to produce a final package that is wise and fair.

6. What if They are More Powerful?

Vigorous exploration of what you will do if you do not reach agreement can greatly strengthen your hand.... Apply knowledge, time, money, people, connections, and wits into devising the best solution for you independent of the other side's assent. The more easily and happily you can walk away from a negotiation, the greater your capacity to affect its outcome.

7. What if They Won't Play?

If the other side announces a firm position, you may be tempted to criticize and reject it. If they criticize your proposal, you may be tempted to defend it and dig yourself in. If they attack you, you may be tempted to defend yourself and counterattack.... Do not push back.... As in the Oriental martial arts of judo and jujitsu, avoid pitting your strength against theirs directly.... Rather than resisting their force, channel it into exploring interests, inventing options for mutual gain, and searching for independent standards.

8. What if They Use Dirty Tricks?

Tricky bargaining tactics are in effect one-sided proposals about negotiating procedure....To counter them, you will want to engage in principled negotiation about the negotiating process.

So How Do I Start?

(1) Find a kindred spirit—someone who shares your concern and is willing to work with you.

(2) Think of yourself as a rock thrown into a still pond. A kindred spirit is the first, smallest ripple in an ever-growing circle. Together, identify other individuals who might be interested in your idea, groups that might be interested or affected by your idea, and people or groups who can help you accomplish your goal.

(3) Identify the ways in which your goals and interests overlap others', and approach those others on that basis.

(4) Intervene at the *lowest* possible level in the system, and solve problems at the lowest possible level in the system.

5) Fight only at the *highest* possible level in the system. Bring as many different levels on board with you as you can. (Note that people often tend to point to the next guy up as the "blockage," the enemy. Parents point to teachers, teachers to principals, principals to superintendents, and so forth. This gets in the way of building alliances—you won't get far that way.)

Gathering Information

You, your co-workers on this project, and your community members are your most important source of information. You are the people who know what you want. Use the worksheets in this book to help you sort out your goals, interests, and resources.

Whenever you are gathering information from people, ask each person you talk to who else you should talk to and how to reach them. You will know you have done a thorough job when you stop getting new names.

Keep a notebook of key information from each conversation.

Knowing Your Community

Kindergarteners can collect childhood stories from Mom and Dad (or Grandma, or Auntie Sue, or the preacher). They could put them together into a book, illustrate it, and display it at the school book fair.

Using the same idea, you can have any grade collect local information from home—ghost stories, disaster stories, hero stories—add your own. (See Chapter IV, Your Community as a Focus of Study for more ideas)

If you get nothing else out of this book, get this: Gathering information about your community in a systematic fashion, and giving it back to the community in a useful form, will accomplish the most good for the least amount of money of any idea we can suggest.

Use students to gather the data so that you cultivate skill development through the process. Kindergarteners can do it; high-school students can do it; whatever their level, they will gain:

information gathering skills

knowledge of their community

pride in their community

Your high-school students can create community resource lists that will be useful to civic leaders, community development committees, chambers of commerce, county commissions, your school board, teachers, everybody.

Students can find useful information about every aspect of life in your community. Have them go to groups and agencies in town to find out what kind of information would be useful to them. Start by getting a group of students to generate a list of questions about a specific topic. Every community could use good information about their local resources.

You need to share the data. Write it into newspaper articles, collect it in community resource guides, and then give them to every organization in town or sell them to raise money. Whatever you do, don't hide this information under a barrel.

Where to Go for Information

• Your district leadership—first and foremost your super-intendent, if you have a good working relationship with that person, and leaders of your local teacher and classified staff unions.

• The public relations office of your state board of education—call the main number and ask who handles public information.

• The legal advisor for your state board of education—once again, call the main number and ask for this person's name and number.

• The legislative aide(s) for your state government education committees—call the legislature switchboard and ask who these people are. If need be, call your own representative's office and ask them to help you.

• Your state supreme court librarian.

• A professor at one of your state universities.

• State-level staff members of teacher and certified staff unions.

• An education aide in your governor's office.

• Libraries, books, and articles.

• Other references listed in this book, such as the National Committee for Citizens in Education, and the Regional Education Labs.

Just as you always ask people for the names of other people, you look in written material for references to other written material. If you read something in a newspaper or popular magazine, the paper or magazine can put you in touch with the author. Most books and articles list the sources used to prepare what you read. Record key information and find these items through your library system or the ERIC system.

Using the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) System

The ERIC system is a nationwide network that collects writings on education issues and makes them available to the public. ERIC has 16 clearinghouses around the country, each with a special focus. For example, the Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools is in Charleston, WV at the Appalachian Education Lab. Even though each clearinghouse has its own focus, each can help you get access to the entire collection of information. The staff members of these clearinghouses are knowledgeable and helpful.

The ERIC system enables you to find out what has been written on almost any education topic. You give the computer key words (descriptors) to help it locate the articles that discuss your subject. For example, if you want to know about financing rural schools, you enter rural, school, and financing into the computer. Sometimes the exact word you want is not on the computer's list, in which case you have to select a replacement. You might, for example, have to replace financing with finance. While this may seem complicated at first, it is mainly a matter of common sense.

The computer responds with a list of articles that touch on your subject, including who wrote them, when they were written, a brief description of what they cover, how many pages there are, and an identification number.

You select the articles that appear to cover what you are after. With their identification numbers, you can get copies of the full text to read. Copies come on paper or on microfiche. If you have access to a large library, you can use the ERIC information to find the articles in your library. You can ask the appropriate clearinghouse to send you the articles you want (for which there may be a charge). If the identification number begins with ED you can buy them from the ERIC

Document Reproduction Service at a per-page cost. You can do this by contacting:

ERIC/EDRS
3900 Wheeler Ave.
Alexandria, VA 22304
1-800-227-3742

If the identification number of the piece you want starts with EJ instead of ED, it will cost $12.00, and you must order it from:

UMI Article Clearinghouse
300 North Zeeb Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48106
1-800-732-0616

No matter where you go to get a copy of your chosen piece, whether you are buying it or borrowing it, you will need the identification number that you got from your information search.

Clearinghouses also write their own material. Contact the one that covers your area of particular interest. See the listing of clearinghouses in Appendix IV.

References

A Parent's Guide to the ERIC Database: Where to Turn with Your Questions About Schooling. ERIC/CRESS, Appalachian Education Lab, Charleston, WV.

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Mathews, David and Noelle McAfee. *An Alternative for Community Development and Educational Reform.* The Kettering Foundation 1990.

Resources—Organizing

Elign, Suzette. 1980. *The Gentle Art of Verbal Self Defense.* Dorset Press.

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Gordon, Thomas. 1970. *Parent Effectiveness Training.* Peter Wyden Inc., NY.

Winecoff and Powell. 1979. Focus. *Seven Steps to Educational Problem Solving: A Systematic Planning Guide.* Pemdell Publishing Co., Midland, MI.

The following are all publications of the National Committee for Citizens in Education (NCCE). They are inexpensive, information-packed booklets.

NCCE
10840 Little Patuxent
Parkway, Suite 301
Columia, MD 21044

Henry Dyer. 1980. Parents Can Understand Testing.

Happy Fernandez. 1985. Parents Organizing to Improve Schools.

Crystal Kuykendall. 1976. Developing Leadership for Parent/Citizen Groups.

Douglas Lawson. 1977. Fund Raising by Parent/ Citizen Groups.

M. Donald Thomas. 1982. Your School: How Well Is It Working?

Resources—Getting Information

A Parent's Guide to the ERIC Database: Where to Turn with Your Questions About Schooling.
A detailed explanation of how to use the ERIC system to get what you need. Available from ERIC/CRESS, Appalachian Education Lab, Box 1348, Charleston, WV 25325.

ACCESS: The Information Clearinghouse About Public Schools

Call 1-800-NETWORK 10 a.m.–4 p.m. Eastern Time, and ask for their one-page fact sheet and an outline of material available from ACCESS. They can also perform individual information searches for you, as can the ERIC clearinghouses, though for these there may be a charge.

Merkman, Robert. 1987. *Find It Fast: How To Uncover Expert Information on Any Subject.* Harper and Row, New York.
This book says it is "For writers, businesspeople, job seekers, entrepreneurs, students, or anyone who needs facts, data, answers or advice." It covers everything from computer databases to conducting an interview and evaluating your sources. A handy reference.

Todd, Alden. 1972, 1979. *Finding Facts Fast: How To Find Out What You Want and Need to Know.* Ten Speed Press, Berkeley, CA.
This book says it is "A handbook for students, political activists, civic leaders, and professionals...based on methods used by reference librarians, scholars, investigative reporters and detectives." It covers much the same material as *Find It Fast*, but concentrates more on written materials. Available from Ten Speed Press, (415) 845-8414.

CHAPTER XI
Making Decisions

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THE DECISION MAKING TABLE

The Decision Making Table helps you evaluate a proposal for

* educational benefits to your children
* other benefits to your children
* costs
* benefits to parents and other community members
* benefits to education professionals and staff
* economic benefits to community

Add to the questions or add to the areas if you see fit. We recommend that you not remove areas or questions - sometimes you don't see the importance of a certain factor until you have forced yourself to think about it awhile.

Use the Decision Making Table to

* decide whether a proposal (whether imposed on you from outside or suggested from within your group) makes sense to you, your school, your district, your community;

* choose between two or more proposals, especially when they have little in common - in other words, the table can help you compare apples to oranges;

* prepare for meetings in which you need to make a case for why you support or oppose a given proposal.

Warning

Computer people say of their work:

Garbage in, garbage out.

It holds for the Decision Making Table too. The table will not correct your lack of knowledge or thoughtfulness. Consult the bibliographies at the back of this book, or related material in this handbook, and do your homework before you pass judgement on proposals you are going to have to live with.

HOW TO USE THE TABLE

The best way -

1) Go through the table discussing the factual information you have gathered on each topic, but not actually answering the questions.

2) Then give each person the chance to fill out the table alone.

3) Then share and discuss until you arrive at group answers for each question, using big sheets of butcher paper to record information where everyone can see it.

Other ways -

You're smart. Figure them out for yourself.

Weighting the Table

The areas and questions are probably not all of equal importance to you. The Table works best if you weight the categories. **Do this before you answer the questions.**

EXAMPLE

Proposed benefit	How important is this? (1 = low; 5 = high)	Yes	No
1. Students learn useful skills	5		5
2. Students better prepared for job	5		5
3. Parents will pay less taxes	3	3	
4. Makes jobs easier for school staff	1	1	
5. Brings and keeps money in community	3	3	
Totals		7	10

In this short example, the weights change the conclusion. Although there are more "yes" answers than "no's," the sum of the weighted no ratings (10) is greater than the sum of the weighted yes answers (7). You would presumably conclude that as a group you oppose this proposal, in spite of there being more yes's than no's.

DECISION MAKING TABLE

DOES _____ **MAKE SENSE?**

1. **What learning effects will this proposal have on our children?**

		How important is this? (1 = low; 5 = high)	Yes	No
a.	Will they better learn the skills of writing, numeracy, analytical thinking, etc.			
	Which students will learn these skills?			
b.	Will they learn more information?		Yes	No
	Which students will?			
	What specific information?			
c.	Will they learn more useful values and attitudes?		Yes	No
	Which ones will?			

What specific values and attitudes?

d. What else will they learn?

2. **<u>What other benefits will this proposal have on our children</u>?**

		How important is this (1 is low is high)	Yes	No
a.	Will they be better prepared for for the future?			

To get jobs?

What kind?

Who will be better prepared?

In what way will they be better prepared?

To <u>create</u> jobs...To go to college?

b. Will the proposal improved their health and safety? Yes No

In what ways?

c. Will this proposal make their lives any easier while they are in school, or later? Yes No

How will it do this?

d. Are there other possible benefits? Yes No

3. **Costs.**

		How important is this? (1 is low 5 is high)	Yes	No
a.	Has anyone prepared a cost estimate for this proposal?			
	Has an independent reviewer checked the cost estimates?			
b.	What are the indirect costs of this proposed change in terms of demands for support services?		Yes	No
c.	Does this proposal save money in the first three years over the present system?		Yes	No
	How much?			
	Does this proposal save money over the long run?			
	How much?			
d.	Are there other cost considerations?		Yes	No
	Please list.			

4. **Will this proposal benefit us and other members of this community?**

How important is this? (1 is low 5 is high) Yes No

a. Will it result in more or better jobs? What different jobs will be created?

How many jobs?

What is the quality of these jobs?

Who will get them?

b. Will members of this community pay less taxes? Yes No

Which taxes?

Tax savings per person: $_____ _____%

c. Will we feel better about ourselves and this community? Yes No

In what way?

d. As a result of this proposal will we be able to be better parents? Yes No

In what way?

e. Are there other benefits for the community? Yes No

What benefits?

Will this proposal benefit school administrators, principals, teachers & other school staff?

		How important is this? (1 is low 5 is high)	Yes	No
a.	Will they be able to do their jobs better?			
	Who?			
	How?			
b.	Will their jobs be easier?		Yes	No
	Whose?			
	How?			

6. **Will this proposal bring new money into this community?**

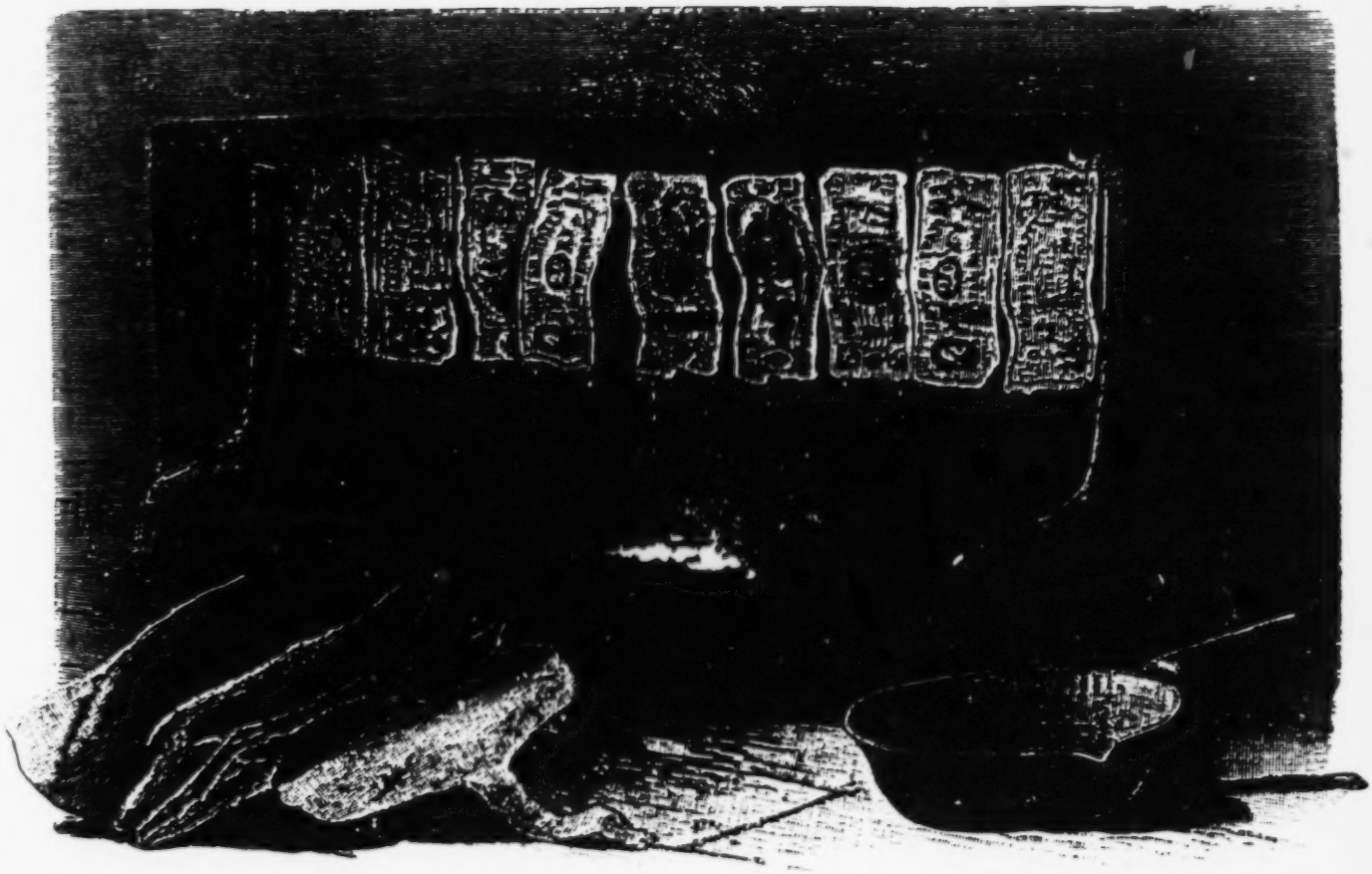
		How important is this? (1 is low 5 is high)	Yes	No
a.	In salaries?			
	Who will get this money?			
	Will it stay in the community?			
b.	In construction expenditures?		Yes	No
	Who will get this money?			
	Will it stay in the community?			
c.	For purchases of supplies, equipment, services?		Yes	No
	Who will get this money?			

Will it stay in the community?

7. **Are there ways to change the proposal to improve any of the above factors?**

		How important is this? (1 is low 5 is high)	Yes	No
a.	Changes at the school level?			
b.	Changes at the county level?			
c.	Waivers that can be requested from the state?			

CHAPTER XII
Raising Funds



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If you work toward changes in your community, sooner or later you'll run into someone who will ask you: "Great idea, but where are you gonna get the money?" Be ready for that question.

Many of the ideas in this book will cost you next to nothing—only time, energy, and commitment. But eventually you will need to raise some money for anything from incidental expenses like advertising and phone calls to full blown projects involving teacher training or new technology. Fund raising on any scale can be touchy business. You are hoping to put other people's money where your mouth is.

When you ask your community to put money behind your goals you are entering into a vulnerable position. Your goals are no longer your own, they become public property. This is why you need to proceed with care and attention to detail. When handled properly, fundraising can offer you a great opportunity to gain the trust and support of a wider group of people.

Where Does Money Come From

Money must come from one of two places: inside your community and/or outside your community. It used to be possible for communities to get outside money to fund school improvements or community development. Many people think that such grant money is still available. That's simply not so. Funding has changed. Nowadays you are unlikely to get any money from outside your community unless you first show that you can raise money inside your community.

Rule One of Fund Raising
Money never comes from outside the community unless you have funding committed from inside the community.

When you put your community's money into the project, three things happen.

1. You have money to match federal, state or foundation money—your community dollar goes farther.

2. You show that your community is ready to work together. Donors have become suspicious of communities that cannot prove that they are working together.

3. You have funds that you control. If some of the money is yours, it is harder for the government (or others) to tell you what to do.

There are generally two ways of raising money inside your community. One way is for you to earn the money. The other way is for others in your community to give you the money. Experience has shown that it is much easier to have money given to you if you first earn some. So, first we show how to earn money.

Earning Money

To earn money there are three steps you will have to take:

1. Create a fund raising workgroup of four to seven people. Do not put too many people on this committee; they can ask for helpers when they need them. Pick experienced people where possible. Put a hard working team player on to chair this workgroup, someone who does not insist on getting all the credit. (Note that if later on, you are going to ask people to give you money, you will also be creating a second fund raising group, your fund raising executive committee.) The executive committee asks for money. The workgroup earns

money.
2. Fund raising takes careful thought. Give your workgroup planning time. Two weeks should be enough time if they work and think hard.

3. Support your fund raising workgroup. Give them a realistic target of how much money to raise—better to beat your target than to fall short. Give them seed money to work with. Give them a good financial record keeper—an independent, experienced treasurer builds community trust.

4. The fund raising workgroup assignment is to work through the following worksheets.

How to Raise Your First Money

Your first step is to come up with a fund raising "event". Look for an event or activity that can be repeated. Do not attempt something none of you knows how to do.

The following worksheet can be completed by a hard working group in one meeting, but do not force it. If there are questions here that you cannot answer, find the answer, and finish this worksheet at another meeting.

Each member should take the completed worksheet home for two or three days, thinking over what wrong calculations might have been made. Then meet again to go over it one last time.

Give this planning task your best effort. Picking the right event makes a big difference in raising that extra amount of money and you can always use extra money.

FUND RAISING 1 WORKSHEET

Who will help?

Who will work? Who has direct experience with specific fund raising events? What can each person do? Who in your community has what kinds of special skills or knowledge? (Don't forget your children, especially high schoolers.) Use the

NAME	SKILLS/RESOURCES	PHONE
	234	

space below to list any and all individuals who might be able to help you out.

FUND RAISING 2 WORKSHEET

Physical Resources

RESOURCES	CONTACT PERSON	PHONE

FUND RAISING 3 WORKSHEET

TIMING

Think about when you'll need the money. Are there any special festivals or gathering in that period that offer fund raising chances? Any good marketing chances to sell mechandise or seasonal services?

EVENT TIME AND PLACE	CONTACT PERSON OR SPONSORING ORGANIZATION	WHAT COULD WE DO THERE

FUND RAISING 4 WORKSHEET

What's Working Nearby

What types of fund raising activities have worked in nearby communities? What seems "in" this year?

EVENT NAME PLACE DESCRIPTION	CONTACT PERSON	PHONE

FUND RAISING 5 WORKSHEET

Promotion

What resources do you have to promote your fund raising event? TV, radio, local paper, regional paper, store windows, public service announcements, church bulletins, school papers, school announcements, company PA systems, billboards, newsletters of local organizations, school children, Town Criers....

NAME OF PUBLICATION, RADIO, TV	TARGET AUDIENCE	CONTACT PERSON/ PHONE	FREQUENCY OF DELIVERY	REGULAR DEADLINE
			238	

FUND RAISING 6 WORKSHEET

What seems to be your best option for making money? Will another option be almost as good but a lot less work? Can you run this option effectively more than once? List the best options below for comparison and discussion. (Copy this sheet to list more options.)

EVENT OPTION	PEOPLE REQUIRED	PHYSICAL RESOURCES	AMOUNT OF PREP. TIME	PROMOTION REQUIRED

Events often require equipment and facilities. List any available resources below. Look around your community. Are there buildings, parks,
REMEMBER: Once you have made your decision let it sit for several days and have another meeting. Do you still agree that you've picked the most promising option?

Specific Event Ideas You Can Consider:

Some of these can be totally "home-grown" with local resources, others (circus) will require your sponsorship of an outside events.

Showcase Houses or Special Places—historic landmarks, caverns, private gardens, somewhere that is otherwise closed and that you can get permission to charge admission to.

Dances—especially a dance that features some season or person that folks will find special enough so that they will pay attention to.

Contests or races at your local fair.

Circus or carnival—get a good location and time of year.

Bingo!

Candy or merchandise sale. (Investigate to see if it is more cost effective to eliminate the middle company and get your merchandise directly.) Check into Sheltered Workshops, local suppliers, and Factory Outlets as sources of goods. The drawback for many of such options is inability to return unsold goods.

Raffle—works well when tied into other activities.

Special dinners/lunches at larger events when such as a county fair, homecoming, or when tourists are passing through town headed to some place else. If you select this option, plan special

publicity. Make your booth really stand out. Communities tend to be swamped by these.

Benefit concerts.

Do not overlook special days: Labor Day, Christmas, End of School, Fourth of July, The Super Bowl, whenever your community may be ready to celebrate.

Do not overlook something your community has in abundance that with discounted local labor could be moved and sold. Sand? Christmas Trees? Sawdust? Water? Firewood?

Asking For Money

Raising big money inside your community by asking for it requires three things: a lot of community trust, a lot of hard work, and a little bit of working money. (You need money to cover expenses while you plan, to cover travel and telephone costs.)

In the next phase of your fund raising drive, we assume that you are going to need much more money than you were able to earn by the event based fund raising discussed above. Let us assume your fund raising target has increased to $75,000.

Pick a realistic target. Do not shoot too high. It is important your community view you as successful.

Before you go any further, make sure you have drawn your community as big as possible. Think of your whole county. Think of parts of adjoining counties that depend upon your county. Write down what your community is and remember this is the universe you are going to work in. Utilize all of it.

1. Call a working meeting of your overall group. Include the members of the fund raising subgroup.

2. Get the most experienced person you can to work as a resource person for this meeting. You need someone who understands what constitutes a realistic strategy. Such a person might be the fund raising director at a local hospital or college. Do you have local nonprofit organizations that may have trained staff? (Do not be quick to pay for such services. Try to get such help for free. Convince them of the community service they're making. Offer them mileage money if you must.

3. Before the meeting contact the chief executive officer of at least three local organizations that you know are generous donors to community causes. Ask how much is the maximum they have given in the past two years to any one community cause. Be careful at this stage not to ask for money and not to let them think you are asking yet. Any organization is proud of what it does. This is an opportunity for them to brag. Your objective is to get for your meeting an idea of donation ceilings.

4. Contact a knowledgeable executive of at least two companies that do business in your community but are not based there. Ask them the same questions: What is the most they have given to a community cause? Once again, you are getting donation ranges for your planning.

5. Track down several organizations that you can find that have done fund raising in your community. Ask how they raised their money, how much they raised from whom? Many organizations do not want to share such information. Be considerate. Do not push, but if you try several angles gently you will probably get the information you need. Do not create a feeling of competition. You need broad-based community support more than you need any group's money or information.

If you can try not to get all of your money from one source. In the long run, one source funding weakens you. The more donors you have the stronger you are, for two reasons. One, more donors means that you control some of the action, rather than being controlled by your single donor. Two, more donors gives you a broader base from which to seek more money. You are not so vulnerable to changes in your funding agencies. So, as a minimal rule, to keep your independence always get your money from at least three places.

Getting To Your Fund Raising Target

Earn one-third of your money. (The strategy to do that was described in the first section of this chapter.) Earning this third of your money is the work of your fund raising workgroup. A pretty reliable rule of thumb is that you can raise from gifts double what you can earn through a series of events spread over one year. (Businesses are more willing to give away money when they see others out working for a share.)

Select donations for one-third of your money from the noncommercial sector-civic groups, interested other groups such as PTOs, teacher unions, county school boards, your county commission, economic development authority, don't forget churches, (some state money may also be available here. Your local board of education is a good source to tell you whether state funds are available.)

Target one-third of your money from businesses. You will be surprised how many businesses are active in your area. Make a comprehensive list. (Making such a list is a fantastic project for a high school class.) And, very importantly, solicit from public utilities such as phone, gas and electric companies. (Many public utilities have established funding for eduction and technology. Design your request to fit the program.)

6. Appoint an Executive Fund Raising Committee. The people on the committee must be comfortable asking other people for money. They will use your business lists to set company targets. There is a lot of experience on the best way to ask for money. The following is the standard rules. Do not ask a company for a donation and let them pick the amount. You tell the business how much you expect in order to meet the community target. To set each business's target, you determine the maximum amount that company has previously given to a community project. That amount (or an amount slightly lower) becomes your target for that business.

Rule of Thumb: You are probably going to receive one-third of the total amounts you have targeted for your community. If you have good community backing you might hit half.

Keep in mind as you go into this process that you are doing your community a favor by asking them to chip in money. Do not let the mentality develop that people or businesses are giving you money. They are giving money to themselves, to their community. The education you do as you ask for money, the attitude of community service you bring to the task, and the attitude of community service you try to develop in your donors, is the heart of your fund raising. The following is a suggested "sales pitch" you can use.

When people give to this project, they are buying into community growth through school reform. Tell the businesses you are sort of "selling shares in your community". As you go about asking for money, ask people to do something also for your community. The key, more than money, as we have said in earlier chapters in this handbook, is to involve your community in this process. Help people see they are helping themselves and their businesses by giving.

How To Ask For Money

Asking for money is an art. Some people can do it. Others always feel uncomfortable. No one should be asking for money who feels uncomfortable—some folks may feel uncomfortable with asking from one person but not from another. That's okay, play off of strengths.

Step One: Publicity. Use all available media. Get the news out what is happening for the community. Build the media message around the theme that if businesses and folks care about the future of their community, they will be giving. Don't play all your media at once. Have two or three people staging out the news. Momentum is key.

Step Two: Get your fund raising workgroup out earning money. If folks see you out working, they will be more likely to give.

Step Three: Assemble a team of folks who are willing to ask for money. This team should consist of community members who are well respected. It is unusually for anyone to have the energy to make more than ten requests, so you may need a fairly long list. Save your best people for the key requests. Assign people to the requests they feel more comfortable making.

Step Four: Practice asking. Start with a request you are sure will work. Do not tackle the hard requests until you have your skills down and momentum up. When you are successful with a big gift, target immediately after that another likely big gift prospect! Three big gifts in a row will make it harder for a fourth prospect to say "no"—it might make them look less than civic minded.

Step Five: Each request should be made by a team of two. (Your people can either work in established pairs or trade partners for different jobs. The important thing is to get the right team for each request.) Each team should set up an appointment to meet with the chief executive

officer of the business or agency being solicited. One member of the team should be someone who knows that person well enough to say "Hey, Joe, you can't say no. This is your community we are asking you to support." If there is someone there willing to push the point in this way, it makes it much harder to say no.

Step Six: Be friendly, help the person and you to relax. This is not a formal affair, nor is it a funeral. Say what you came for. Briefly explain your project, your fundraising strategy and goals. Remind the person that you are talking about the future of your community, that change will not come about unless the whole community bands together, puts aside squabbles, and makes change come. Find out what the person's concerns are. Answer them. Convey a tone of appreciation for their role in the commuity. Give them something in writing that says: (a) why you are asking for money; (b) how you will get all of your money; (c) how money much you want from them.

Then make the request. State the amount you want and that you know they've given at that level before to the community. Then shut up. Don't kill your request by saying something after you've made it. Say the price and be quiet. Silence puts the heat on them. With carefully timed silence you will win more requests than you would expect to at first.

If you are given a lesser amount than you requested, politely ask if there's any way they can give a second gift in the future to meet the target. Ask whether they could meet the target in several installments. Ask if you can come back later. Remember to be friendly, to make it clear that you are working for the community. Whatever the answer you get, be sure they know that you appreciate their time and consideration.

Step Seven: Before you leave find out what type of recognition the person wants. Make sure you have the name recorded in the way they want it.

Step Eight: Send a thank you note. Give each giver as much recognition as possible. Others in your community will notice and it will make future requests easier.

Step Nine: Keep your donors informed afterwards. Ask for their advice, invite their participation in other ways, acknowledge their gifts, report to them on how you are using their money. (But don't make yourself a nuisance. Some folks want to give and be left alone.)

Funds from Outside Your Community

You have read our strategy for raising money. It is based on the belief that a community's best source of funding is found within that community. This is an almost universal rule. Communities should be wary of running after funds from outside the community early on in their fund raising. Such outside funds will be much easier to get when the community can show it is doing its part.

However, once you have started your community based fund raising do not dismiss outside community funding. Make inquires from state and federal government and relevant foundations. Find out these agency requirements you might qualify. Find out deadlines. Make note of these. As you go about your in-community fund raising look for people with experience with these outside funding sources. Request their help. It is unlikely, without specialized assistance, even when you have done your homework, that you will be successful with these highly competitive outside funding.

Still you may be able to use the community money you have raised to leverage outside money. It is hard to tell in a step-by-step fashion how to raise

outside money. The rules for raising outside money differ from source to source. Here is a simple check list to keep in mind.

Point One: This is the homework part: the rules for raising money from sources outside your community can be told to you by the folks who are giving out the money. Follow their rules carefully. There might be forms to fill out for federal and state money. There might be grant applications to fill out for foundations' money. Ask the donor for a list of prior grantees. Ask for a sample of a successful grant application. Ask to whom you can also talk.

Point Two: Talk to other groups that have gotten similar funds from this source. Ask how they did it. Ask them to advise you what to write, who to see.

Point Three: Go beyond the rules. For state, federal and foundation sources there will be politicking to be done. Find out who influences the decisions and go visit them personally, send them several support letters. Generally speaking, the squeaking wheel still is the one that gets the green grease. Remember, do everything the rules say, then do more.

Point Four: Create a way of showing these outside sources what you've done in your community with community resources. So, once again, before you go after either federal, state or foundation money, you are best served if you have set in motion a strong momentum to raise local funds.

Other Local Sources of Funds

Levies: In putting together a fund raising strategy, one choice that should always be considered is to put a time limited levy on the ballot and ask the public at large to pay the bill. Passing such educational levies is tough. If you have done a solid job of building a base in your community, though, you might pass one. Maybe your group can think of a creative new levy that does not bother the elderly

(they are usually the ones who vote down school levies), or, does not bother the farmers (they usually feel themselves over-taxed). When thinking about levies, be forewarned that you may spend a lot of time, putting all your reform eggs in this basket, only to fail after months of work by the whimsy of the ballot box.

Out-Of County Owners:
Some rural areas have large numbers of out-of-county land owners. Their names and addresses are recorded by the assessor. A letter of solicitation can be mailed to each, telling them what you are up to and asking for support. In many cases, if they are well enough off to own land one place and live elsewhere, they may also be accustomed to personal donation requests. Build a case relating the well-being of their investment in your district to your efforts to improve the district. Tell them who they should stop by and see next time they are in the area.

Final Rule Of Fund Raising:

Fund raising is successful when the drive has a written fund raising plan that is made public and breaks down the drive into at least three funding sections. Write down your plan, do not make your seeking of money a secret—that's the way rumors get going. Show your donors (and anyone who will look at it) your written plan. Have articles written about it in the newspaper. In any community money matters should be public knowledge—for your protection. Publicize the plan.

Don't make it your plan. Make it your community's plan. Make your whole community want your plan to succeed. Good luck. With hard, consistent work, you can do it.

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APPENDIX A
Knowing the System

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The array of players in our public school system is mind boggling even to those who work in it. Furthermore, every state is different. The chief state school officer is called the Superintendent of Schools in one place, the Commissioner of Education somewhere else. The State Department of Education calls most of the shots in one state, while the Governor's Education Office may play a dominant role in another. You will have to discover this information about your state for yourself. Though the power balance will differ from place to place, you will find the following players on every field.

Administrators

This group includes principals, district superintendents, regional officers, chief state school officers, and their helpers. Administrators generally do not interact directly with students, although in small schools the principal might also teach. Administrators are responsible for making the system work. They interpret policy and see that policy decisions are turned into working programs.

Theoretically, administrators don't make policy. At every level however, they wield significant influence on policy decisions. School boards, legislators, and governors lean heavily on administrators for information. Administrators select what information to provide, and prioritize issues for policymakers by the way they present these issues. Administrators can influence policy.

Of course, administrators also have their own decision-making authority for a variety of day-to-day issues related to their jobs. And they have the authority of job status. They are less politically

organized than teachers, and therefore have less of the political power of numbers.

Administrators have significant personal power, for better or for worse. An enthusiastic, sympathetic administrator can establish a positive mood, involve everyone in decisionmaking, and accomplish a great deal through true leadership. A defensive, bored, or hostile administrator can spoil the whole pot of soup.

This is why one major movement in school reform, called the effective schools movement, concentrates on developing leadership skills among school principals so they can establish effective policy in their schools.

Administrators and you: Administrative control of information will directly affect anything you try to do. On the one hand, you will need information that only administrators can provide. On the other, if you have information that could affect decisionmaking, you will have to present it convincingly to administrators who are in a position to pass it along, use it, or contradict it.

Teachers

As lone voices, teachers often view themselves as victims of a bureaucratized system in which every decision is already made, in which their every waking moment is controlled, and in which they are inadequately supported to do their jobs.

In recent years teachers have organized themselves politically. Because of sheer numbers, teachers' professional organizations have achieved significant political power. They affect decisionmaking primarily through collective bargaining and the political weight of large numbers of people speaking with a unified voice.

As a result of organized efforts and new thinking among school reformers, teachers are acquiring

significant decisionmaking authority. Faculty senates, school improvement teams, or whatever they are called where you live increasingly decide curricular issues, select textbooks, and establish discipline policies, all decisions that used to be handed down from above.

In West Virginia, which has no collective bargaining agreement with teachers, two professional teachers' organizations in the state were still able to command the state's first-ever teacher strike to win higher salaries for teachers. While debate raged about the legality of the strike and state leaders' response to it, no one questioned its effectiveness in forcing the state to act on the teachers' agenda.

Teachers and you: Unfortunately, relationships between teachers and parents are frequently poor, even in small communities where they may know one another. Teachers complain that they don't hear from parents except when they are angry over a teacher's behavior. They complain that parents no longer back them up (as they supposedly did in the good old days), whether by teaching their children to respect authority or by making sure that they have had enough food and rest and have done their homework. On the other hand, teachers may not know how to enlist parents' help, may have a narrow view of what parents can (and would like to) do, and may have little time to communicate with parents.

Parents may view both the school and teachers as threatening their dignity and their control over their children's lives. They may consider teaching to be a "cushy" job. They may be busy with multiple jobs and multiple children, and may have little idea of how to work cooperatively with teachers.

The parent-teacher link is both an issue in itself and a vehicle for accomplishing your goals. You won't get far without teachers, and they will get much further than they do now with your help.

District School Boards

Though some boards are appointed, most are composed of elected citizens. As a consequence, they tend to be heavily dependent on administrators for information and guidance. Furthermore, though boards are responsible for a number of financial decisions, well over half the money they "control" is tied up in personnel costs or in money that is already earmarked by federal and state governments. Thus, a school board's financial leeway may be very limited. Elected boards may be more responsive to local issues and political efforts than other education leaders are.

Your school board and you: If your school board members are elected, they are susceptible to the voting booth. At best they have good relationships within the community and are responsive to citizen activity. If so, they can help you tremendously, and everybody wins. If not, you at least have the option of organizing voting campaigns to replace them. In all your dealings with school board members, consider what they really can do, and what they can't. Also, remember that they must make decisions for all the people they serve. If you are part of an "out group," you can insist that your needs be considered. But if you are part of a dominant group, make sure you are leaving room for everyone's concerns. When the board members feel that you are informed and are trying to improve things for everyone, they are more likely to work with you rather than against you.

State School Boards

State school boards (called Boards of Regents in some places) fill the same policymaking role as district boards, but at a higher level. They are elected in some states, appointed in others. They, like district school boards, tend not to be educational professionals. The policies they write are carried out by the Chief State School Officer

(also called the State Superintendent or Commissioner) and the State Department of Education.

The state board and you: Once again, it makes a big difference whether this is an elected or appointed body. Either way, this may be a neglected group as far as citizen activity goes. The greatest advantage to decisions made by this board is that they can be changed more readily, than decisions enacted into law. When you can provide the state board with information that favors your efforts, you may affect itspolicies. After all, the state board's primary sources of information are state department officials, whose stake in the system is very different from yours.

Chief State School Officer

This is the chief administrator of a state's public school system. This administrator answers to the state board of education, implementing its policies and directing the activity of the state department of education. However, as mentioned before, the administrator may exercise considerable authority by controlling much of the information with which the board makes decisions.

Chief state school officers are elected in some states, appointed by the state school board in others, and appointed by the governor in others.

Your CSSO and you: This is a good person to know and to have on your side of an issue but is probably a hard person to get to. Like anyone on the state level, the CSSO is responsible for a large operation that is not readily responsive to local perspectives.

CSSOs will typically be dealing with large, amalgamated information. Take, for example, teacher-student ratios. If you plug in all the teachers and all the students in your state, you may wind up with one teacher for every 15

students. When you look at your school, you may have a very different ratio for the school as a whole. And when you look in the classroom, you will probably see something altogether different—say, one teacher for 24 students. The CSSO will, however, be basing decisions on the big picture of one teacher for every fifteen students. You can provide this person with key information about how these decisions play out on the home front. Don't expect appreciation or changed decisions from this information, however. The CSSO still has to answer to many pressures and taskmasters, like limited budgets, other interest groups, the legislature and governor, and his or her own educational priorities. You don't get to be CSSO without having your own agenda.

Courts

Across the country, courts have been entering the education arena in recent years to settle disputes. State funding of school systems has been a major issue in a number of states, with courts stepping in to arbitrate between the state system and those who assert that the funding formula is unfair.

Courts can only enter the decision-making arena when someone turns to them to resolve differences. Once involved, however, courts have been using individual cases to insert themselves farther and farther into the heart of educational decisions.

The courts and you: The courts have entered the education picture because people have used them.

Using the legal System to achieve your goal is costly and time consuming, and requires that you assess the legal arguments available to you. Clearly, it requires that you organize professional help. You may also need to organize a broad base of support to help cover costs. Even if the decision goes your way, you may never see the results—they must filter down through the system, which may resist them at every turn.

But, if you feel that other means are exhausted and that you have a case, the courts may force an issue that bureaucrats and politicians refuse to tackle. (See Chapters ? and ? on organizing and fund-raising.)

Legislators

Legislators, too, have recently become very active in educational decisionmaking. The key distinction here is that legislators pass laws; other policymakers just make policy. Why does this matter? Because when you attempt to create or change legislation, you enter a much more complex arena than that of administrative decisionmaking.

Laws are hard to change once they are in place. For example, if your state has a *law* about how many days students must attend school, it will be far more difficult for you to get permission to try a four-day school week than if you just have a state department *policy* determining attendance days. You must convince a lot more people, and in the process you may encounter opposition.

On the other hand, while they are being created, laws may get changed too much, accumulating exceptions and even unrelated amendments by the time they are finally passed. And laws are usually passed without money attached, and lack of money may render them ineffective.

Despite all of this, your legislators are going to be passing laws, with or without you. If you care about the product, be part of producing it.

Legislators and you: State legislators are people like you and me. They are probably interested in being re-elected, and may not be particularly knowledgeable about education, unless they have chosen that as their specialty. You can become important to them as a source of information, both about educational ideas and about how their

decisions affect your community. Clearly, you can also bring political pressure to bear on them. The extent of this pressure depends on who else is pressuring them and how well you have been able to organize support for your view. Legislators have to vote on so many different issues that they frequently vote blind, following someone else's lead, whether it is their party leader, an influential interest group, or a colleague whose opinion they respect.

Inform them regularly—give them the words and data they need to defend the stand you want them to take. Thank them whenever you can.

Governors

Governors have recently been taking education policymaking by storm. They have been setting educational goals for their states, defining policy priorities, and proposing budgets to back up their agendas. They have extensive status authority for setting the tone of education discussions within a state, and have significant bargaining power for getting their legislative agendas passed. They appoint people to leadership positions of every description, they create special task forces and committees to recommend policy, and they influence spending.

Governors, like other state-level players, work on a scale that skews local perspective. They deal with numbers too large to reflect the truth about communities. Furthermore, they are besieged with problems, many of them financial. Provide your governor with real information and effective solutions to problems that he or she recognizes as important. And don't forget that governors, as elected officials, respond to voting blocs. They may consider your issues to be unimportant until they hear from large numbers of people about the same issue.

State Departments of Education

The state department of education disperses most of the money that funds your school system. It controls most of the information about your system—student achievement, who is on the payroll for how much, what policies and special programs are in place, and so forth. The trick is how to get hold of the information you need. The department is full of people who know only one area—if you don't ask the right question, you won't get the right answer. The only tips we can offer:

Most public figures, elected or otherwise, will not want to change policies they have stated publicly. Small-scale pilot projects may give you what you need and protect these people from having to embrace your whole agenda. Always seek solutions that allow others to meet your needs without compromising their own.

- Get a list of all positions that sound as if they are related to your interests.
- Find out who is in charge of public relations or public information, and ask them to help you find the right person.
- Be polite, but keep calling and keep asking.

The professionals staffing the department are not elected; they have jobs to do, and they answer to their bosses, not to you. While they may be legally bound to provide you with certain kinds of information, they may not be aware that they are so bound. Even if they are aware, they may see your inquiry as an interruption. On the other hand, they may be nice people who go out of their way to help you. Their reactions will depend in part on how you come across.

Regional Service Agencies

Most states have some sort of regional office that mediates between local boards and the state department of education. What holds for state departments holds for regional offices, except that regional office staff members will be better informed about your area. These agencies often play an important role in developing of distance learning systems, because their scope can combine cost efficiency with flexible service.

Parents and Citizens

> *Although parent/citizen participation is clearly approved by school precedent and federal legislation, there are few examples of successful and effective citizen participation in the schools and many parents believe that their input is neither sought nor desired and respected when given.*
>
> *(Marburger, p. 10)*

Sound familiar? Those involved professionally in education have an organized place in the school system—a defined job to do, and a structured way to do it. Parents and citizens do not, except as voters. They must make their own place.

The same reform trends that have provided more decisionmaking power to teachers have created some small openings for citizen groups. These are often superficial—advisory groups with no authority. But more and more, parents and citizens are being included in school improvement teams.

Their role is tenuous at best. They must contend with teachers and administrators who can claim information that is not available to citizens. They must master the implication that they are dealing in a professional field where they do not belong. As teachers finally get professional recognition, they may see parental involvement as a direct threat to the status they are trying to win. This, of course, is magnified by parents' insecurity about what they have to offer.

Parents affect schools both individually and in groups. Individually, parents prepare their children for school, meet with teachers about their children's progress, and vote in school board elections. In groups, parents unite through service and interest groups such as PTOs; they organize

from time to time around particular issues, such as textbook selection or school consolidation; they join mandated organizations, such as those created to support parents of children in special programs or school advisory councils. But most of these organizations have very little influence on school decisions. This handbook aims to change that.

Parents and citizens and you: Parents and citizens have many good reasons for not wanting to be involved in educational decisions. They may change their minds if they see that they can be effective, and if they see how school decisions reach beyond school walls and affect their community.

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APPENDIX B
Resources—Organizations and Journals

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ORGANIZATIONS THAT WILL HELP YOU

Education Laboratories

The Federal government funds education labs around the country. They are staffed with knowledgeable, capable people and are excellent sources of information. Here is a list of those labs, their rural programs directors, and how to contact them. Get to know these people and the resources of these labs. It is specifically their mandate to serve those in their regions who are active in rural education. Note however, that the labs are not political bodies and cannot take political action for you - they are for information. Here they are:

Appalachian Education Laboratory
Rural, Small Schools Program
Box 1348
Charleston, West Virginia 25325
Contact:C. Todd Strohmenger
1-800-9120 (outside WV)
1-800-344-6646 (in WV)
347-0400 (local)

The Appalachian Ed. Lab is also home to the Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, which manages the ERIC database for rural education and small schools. Contact: Craig Howley at the same telephone numbers.

Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development
Rural Education
1855 Folsom St.
San Francisco, CA 94103
Contact: Stanley Chow
1-415-565-3000

Mid-Continent Regional Education Laboratory
Rural Education
12500 E. Illiff, #201
Aurora, Colorado
Contact: Paul Nachtigal or Toni Haas
1-303-337-0990

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory
Rural Education
1900 Spring Rd. Suite 300
Oak Brook, Illinois 60521-1480
Contact: Gene Roth
1-708-571-4700

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
101 SW Main Street, Suite 500
Portland, Oregon 97204
Contact: Steve Nelson
1-503-275-9500

Research for Better Schools
Rural Education
444 North Third Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19123
Contact: Mercedes Fitzmaurice
1-215-574-9300

Southwest Educational Development Laboratory
Rural Education
211 East Seventh Street
Austin, Texas 78701
Contact: Sue Liberty
1-512-476-6861

Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands
Rural, Small Schools Initiative
290 South Main Street
Andover, Massachusetts 01810
Contact: R. Michael Mayo
1-508-470-0098

Other National Information Sources

Council for Basic Education
725 15th Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20005
1-202-347-4171

Education Commission of the States
707 17th St. Suite 2700
Denver, CO 80202
(303) 299 - 3600
Contact: Chris Pipho or Melody Bush, Clearinghouse

(ECS works closely with the Coalition of Essential Schools described in the resource section of the chapter on New Basics.)

Home and School Institute
1201 16th Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 466-3633
Founder: Dorothy Rich

Institute for Responsive Education
605 Commonwealth Ave.
Boston, MA 02215
(617) 353 - 3309
President: Don Davies

National Committee for Citizens in Education
10840 Little Patuxent Pkwy., Suite 301
Columbia, MD 21044
(301) 997 - 9300 or 1 (800) NETWORK between 10:00 and 4:00 EST.
Contact: Nancy Berla

NCCE promotes parental involvement in education. Its excellent pamphlets for citizens are quoted extensively in this book. Ask for their catalogue. They are an excellent starting point for you. If they can't answer your questions they can probably steer you toward someone who can.

National Center for Community Education
1017 Avon St.
Flint, MI 48503
(313) 238 - 0463
Contact: Shane Tiedeman

The Community Education Center offers free-of-charge 10 day training programs for those interested in developing community-wide educational programs. Participants pay a small registration fee and their transportation to the Center in Flint; all other costs are covered by the center.

Rocky Mountain Institute
Economic Renewal Program
1739 Snowmass Creek Road
Snowmass, CO 81654-9199
(303) 927-3851

Rocky Mountain Institute is a non-profit research and educational foundation whose goal is to foster the efficient and sustainable use of resources as a path to global security. Their Economic Renewal Program applies RMI's internationally renowned resource efficiency work at the community level to build local capacity for a more sustainable and secure future. The Economic Renewal Program provides practical tools and training seminars to put sustainable development within everyone's reach. They have several workbooks and publications.

Rural Clearinghouse for Lifelong Education and Development
Kansas State University
College Court Building
Manhattan, KS 66502
(913) 532 - 5560

This clearinghouse is a national effort to improve rural access to continued education. They take a "whole community" approach to education, similar to that advocated in this book.

Rural Information Center
National Agricultural Library
Room 304
Beltsville, MD 20705
(301) 344 - 2547

RIC provides information and referral services to people working to maintain the vitality of America's rural areas.

ORGANIZATIONS TO JOIN

National Committee for Citizens in Education (NCCE)
10840 Little Patuxent Parkway
Suite 301
Columbia, MD 21044-3199
1-800-NETWORK
Contact: Nancy Berla

Established to promote citizen involvement in public education, this organization runs a help line for parents with school-related questions of any sort. They also publish a journal and a catalogue of books and materials related to parent involvement in schools. Some topics: "How To Run a School Board Campaign and Win," School Closings and Declining Enrollment, A Guide To Effective Parent/Citizen Involvement," and "Parents Organizing to Improve Schools." NCCE has affiliate groups in many regions.

National Community Education Association (NCEA)
801 N. Fairfax St.
Alexandria, VA 22314
1-703-683-6232
Contact: Starla Jewell-Kelly

This is a membership organization open to individuals and groups. NCEA offers customized training sessions and technical services, provides a newsletter and catalogue of materials, and holds an annual conference for members. The organization is closely associated with the National Center for Community Education in Flint, Michigan, which offers subsidized, in-depth training sessions. (See "Resources for Information and Training") Training enables communities to assess their educational needs and design their own solutions. NCEA has affiliate groups in most states.

National Rural Education Association (NREA)
230 Education Building
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, CO 80523
1-303-491-7022
Contact: Joe Newlin, Exec. Director

NREA members are predominantly education professionals. However, this may be the largest national voice for rural education. NREA produces a journal, "The Rural Educator," and a magazine for teachers, "The Country Teacher," both of which you will receive for your membership payment.

National Rural and Small Schools Consortium (NRSSC)
National Rural Development Institute
Western Washington University
Miller Hall 359
Bellingham, WA 982225
(206) 676 - 3576
Contact: Jennifer Lewis

NRSSC describes itself as "an action-oriented group of individuals and agencies working to enhance rural and small school education and to address associated problems." It produces a journal (Journal of Rural and Small Schools) and a bi-monthly newsletter, holds an annual conference, and provides information. NRSSC is affiliated with the American Council on Rural Special Education located at the same address.

Organizations That Deal with the System

These organizations have school improvement programs, provide an array of informative materials, and have knowledgeable staff members. They can send you information packets on themselves, including catalogues of resource materials. They may also official positions on issues of interest to you. Many states also have an association of professional educators. They differ politically from the NEA and AFT. Ask your teachers if there is such a group in your area. They have no national organization.

Administrators

National Association of Elementary School Principals
1615 Duke Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 684-3345
Contact: June Million - Public Information

National Association of Secondary School Principals
1904 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091
(703) 860-0200
Contact: Dr. Thomas Koerner

American Association of School Administrators
1801 N. Moore Street
Arlington, VA 22209
(703) 875-0717
(703) 528-0700

Teachers

American Federation of Teachers
555 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20001
(202) 879-4400 ext 4463
(Educational Issues)

National Education Association
12001 16th Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 833-4000

District School Boards

National School Boards Association
1680 Duke Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 838-6722
Contact: Richard Davis

State School Boards

National Association of State Boards of Education
1012 Cameron Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 684-4000
Contact: Gene Wilwhort

Chief State School Officer

Council of Chief State School Officers
400 N. Capital Street, NW
Suite 379
Washington, D.C. 20001-1551
(202) 393-8161
Contact: Ms. Tommie Williams

Parents/Citizens

National Committee for Citizens in Education
1-800-NETWORK

National PTO
700 North Rush
Chicago, IL 60611
(312) 787-0977

JOURNALS TO INFORM AND INSPIRE YOU

Country Teacher
National Rural Education Association
230 Education Building
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, CO 80523
(303) 491 - 7022

Journal of Rural and Small Schools
National Rural and Small Schools Consortium
Miller Hall 359
Western Washington University
Bellingham, WA 98225
(206) 676 - 3576

Journal of Rural Community Psychology
California School of Professional Psychology
1350 M. Street
Fresno, CA 93721
(209) 486 - 8420

In addition to the journals listed here, consult Organizations to Join (Appendix) and the Resources section of The New Basics. Most of these organizations produce journals or newsletters about their areas of interest.

APPENDIX C
About Woodlands Mountain Institute

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Woodlands Mountain Institute

Description of Institutional Capabilities

Woodlands Mountain Institute is an international nonprofit organization based in the Appalachian Mountains with an international mission of "advancing mountain cultures and preserving mountain environments". Since 1972, Woodlands programs have been distinguished by being practical in nature and offering innovative, long-term solutions to societal problems through combining an understanding of developmental needs of communities and an environmentally sustainable use of community and natural resources.

Woodlands Community Schools Program focuses on community revitalization through using schools in small rural communities as the locus of community development. The thrust of this work is to integrate and make more available development services that otherwise are separated from each other -- and perhaps from the communities -- through the conventional sector-by-sector service distribution system. (The Community Schools Program is the author of this Handbook.)

For nearly two decades Woodlands School Courses have tackled the triple problems of utilizing in a serious way life-outside-the-classroom, of improving student motivation for learning, and of making relevant the environmental understanding that is ever more pressing for world society.

Woodlands Leadership Division annually directly inspires 100 West Virginia high school students to achieve their highest college goals and indirectly advises more than 10,000 students each year concerning college. This initiative is not only now one of the most successful college-going initiatives in the country, but it is also growing into an impressive initiative in bringing college graduates into West Virginia leadership positions.

Woodlands Mt. Everest Ecosystem Conservation Program works with the governments of Nepal and the Tibet Autonomous Region of China to develop two innovative nature preserves that in their respective countries present new, cost-effective, ecologically based management of nature as the traditional, western national park model has demonstrated numerous failings. The preserve in Tibet is the size of the State of Massachusetts; the preserve in Nepal is the size of the State of Rhode Island.

Woodlands has been involved in rural health work for fifteen years. Medical expeditions (jointly run with Johns Hopkins University) have described community health conditions in remote valleys of Nepal, Ecuador, India and China. A U.S. based rural health program initiated by Woodlands in Pendleton County West Virginia was recently named one of thirteen national demonstration sites for the practice of Community Oriented Primary Care, a cost-effective, pioneer approach to health care delivery.

In addition to all the above projects, Woodlands Mountain Institute has an active program of research and development that examines new program initiatives in mountain development and mountain environment preservation. Active exploratory work in underway for broader activities in the Appalachian Mountains and for starting new work in the Andes Mountains.

Additional information about the work of Woodlands Mountain Institute is available from the organization.

Woodlands Mountain Institute
Main & Dogwood Streets
Franklin, WV 26807
(304) 358-2401
(304) 358-2400 (FAX)

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APPENDIX D
What Level Should We Work On?

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What Level Should We Work On?

School and community improvement goes forward on many levels. You will need to decide which level(s) of action best suit your goals. Clearly, before you use this sheet you need to clarify your goals.

With a project idea in front of you, consider

1) Can we accomplish our entire goal locally?

If yes, congratulations. Get to work.

2) Can we accomplish some part of our goal locally?

If yes, go to other worksheets to start planning, but also continue with this worksheet.

3) Are there roadblocks to accomplishing this project? (Permissions, funds, stubborn bureaucracies, policies, laws, red tape, etc.)

School? Who/what?

District? Who/what?

State policy?

State law?

Federal law?

4) What resources might you have for breaking down these roadblocks? (Let's say your answer to #3 was a lack of funds on the school level. Now you need to consider whether there are district funds, state level grants, money-earning possibilities or private sources to help you continue.)

Community? Who/what?

School? Who/what?

District? Who/what?

Regional? Who/what?

State? Who/what?

Federal? Who/what?

Private? (eg. foundations or national organizations)

Rule of Thumb: The higher you go in the political system, the broader your support group must be.

When you find you need to challenge established policy or law, you need partners. Whether on the local level or the state level, power comes with numbers.

You can affect local change with local people. If you want to affect state level change, you will need a statewide network.

5) Whose permission do you need in order to proceed with this project?
School—principal? teacher(s)? service personnel? parents? students?
Regional officers? State Department of Education? Board of Education? Legislature? Special authorities? Courts?

Name	Address	Phone

Community—mayor? Chamber of Commerce? Planning Commission? Development Committee? civic leaders? County Commission? general public? others? District—Superintendent? School board? Specialists?

Name	Address	Phone